



# Piloting Accessibility Diversity Assessment Tool:

Supporting  
Employees with  
Disabilities in SMEs



## Partners



The Diversity Institute conducts and coordinates multi-disciplinary, multi-stakeholder research to address the needs of diverse Canadians, the changing nature of skills and competencies, and the policies, processes and tools that advance economic inclusion and success. Our action-oriented, evidence-based approach is advancing knowledge of the complex barriers faced by under-represented groups, leading practices to effect change, and producing concrete results. The Diversity Institute is a research lead for the Future Skills Centre.



The Future Skills Centre (FSC) is a forward-thinking centre for research and collaboration dedicated to driving innovation in skills development so that everyone in Canada can be prepared for the future of work. We partner with policymakers, researchers, practitioners, employers and labour, and post-secondary institutions to solve pressing labour market challenges and ensure that everyone can benefit from relevant lifelong learning opportunities. We are founded by a consortium whose members are Toronto Metropolitan University, Blueprint, and The Conference Board of Canada, and are funded by the Government of Canada's Future Skills Program.



Inclusive Design for Employment Access (IDEA) helps build employer capacity for sustainable and rewarding employment opportunities for persons with disabilities through evidence-informed policy and practice. IDEA develops evidence-informed tools and resources through co-design with partners that help advance workplace capacity for recruitment, hiring, onboarding, retention, mentorship and promotion of persons with disabilities across the full range of employment opportunities. Where possible, they draw on practices that have shown promise in one or more workplaces in Canada and elsewhere. Their work is spearheaded by teams of researchers, global experts and industry leaders. Many of those involved in IDEA identify as persons with disabilities.

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# Executive Summary

Persons with disabilities continue to experience employment barriers, such as unmet accommodations, discrimination, racism, ableism and insufficient organizational support. Governments and organizations have implemented mechanisms, programs and initiatives to support persons with disabilities on pathways to employment; however, more work is needed.

Research consistently shows the benefits of organizations adopting equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI), accessibility and disability inclusion strategies. However, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) often lack the tools, resources and dedicated human resource (HR) departments to implement these practices.

Various tools and assessments on EDI, accessibility and disability inclusion exist; however, they may be difficult for SMEs to navigate. To address these gaps, the Diversity Institute (DI), in collaboration with the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, developed the pilot Accessibility Diversity Assessment Tool (DAT) Add-on for SMEs to assess accessibility components of their EDI strategies, policies and programs and receive tailored best

practices. This tool has organizational and societal implications for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the labour market: It helps organizations support persons with disabilities on pathways to employment and advancement, creates and fosters inclusive organizational cultures and allows SMEs to develop partnerships and programs with the mission of advancing inclusive employment outcomes and experiences for persons with disabilities in Canada.

This report is intended for a broad audience that includes SMEs, researchers, policy makers, disability advocates and organizations committed to EDI, accessibility and disability inclusion. It is an informative resource that provides evidence of the persistent barriers to employment for persons with disabilities. It also serves as a practical tool to guide organizations, particularly SMEs, toward more inclusive workplaces for persons with disabilities by introducing the pilot Accessibility DAT Add-on to help assess accessibility strategies within existing EDI strategies and provide best practices to support EDI, accessibility and disability inclusion.



*The Accessibility DAT helps organizations support persons with disabilities on pathways to employment and advancement, creates and fosters inclusive organizational cultures.*

## Study design

This report builds on previous DI and Future Skills Centre work by providing information on the prevalence of employment and barriers for persons with disabilities, as well as shifting the focus to the role of SMEs in creating accessible and disability-inclusive spaces for persons with disabilities. The following questions guide this report:

- What employment barriers prevent persons with disabilities from fully and meaningfully participating in the labour market?
- What challenges do SMEs face when developing, implementing and monitoring EDI, accessibility and disability inclusion strategies?
- What EDI, accessibility and disability inclusion assessment tools and resources are available to support Canadian SMEs and larger organizations?
- How does the pilot Accessibility DAT Add-on help SMEs improve EDI, accessibility

and disability inclusion strategies?

- What promising practices are being used to help organizations advance EDI, accessibility and disability inclusion in Canada?

The report uses findings from industry reports, scholarly articles and Statistics Canada to identify employment barriers for persons with disabilities and understand current EDI, accessibility and disability inclusion efforts in Canada, particularly as related to SMEs. It also introduces the pilot Accessibility DAT Add-on as a solution to help SMEs develop and implement these practices. A desk review was conducted to identify publicly available EDI, accessibility and disability inclusion tools and resources, as well as industry best practices from DI's Best Practice Database, a database of over 1,200 evidence-based practices, case studies and resources.

## Context

Over the past 30 years, the definition of disability has evolved from a medical model to a social and human rights model that recognizes societal, environmental (both physical and social) and systemic barriers that limit the full and meaningful participation of persons with disabilities. Today, no single all-encompassing definition exists; however, there are common themes. These definitions tend to focus on attitudes, stigmas and prejudices that prevent persons with disabilities from fully participating in society. The social and human rights models are also incorporated into federal, provincial and municipal legislation to create barrier-free environments and improve the experiences of persons with disabilities in society.

Human difference is a natural part of society, and as a result, people experience disability in diverse ways and encounter different barriers. For example, the experiences of persons with autism may differ from those of persons with mental health conditions, addictions, or physical disabilities. However, even among individuals with the same disability types, barriers vary based on personal, social and environmental factors. Environments and systems are rarely neutral; they reflect broader societal values, norms and expectations, which can unintentionally exclude persons with disabilities.

### **Prevalence, severity and types of disability in Canada**

As of 2022, 27% of Canadians aged 15 years and older (nearly 8 million people) had one or more disabilities, up from 22% in 2017. Youth, women and seniors also have higher disability rates. For example, women are more likely than men to have a disability (35% vs. 24%). People who identify as Indigenous and racialized people also have higher rates of disability.

A one-size-fits-all approach does not exist when referring to disabilities; for example, there are individual variations and differences between invisible and visible disabilities. There are several types of disabilities, each including a range of disabilities with very different implications. In 2022, 16.7% of Canadians with disabilities reported a pain-related disability, followed by flexibility-related (10.9%), mobility-related (10.6%) and mental health-related (10.4%) disabilities. Disability severity also varies; almost two-fifths (39%) of persons with disabilities reported a mild disability compared to 20% who reported a very severe disability.

An understanding of disability from an intersectional perspective (e.g., racialized persons with disabilities or Indigenous persons with disabilities) is quite limited in Canadian statistics. Some of the latest statistics include:

- In 2017, 14.3% of Canadians with disabilities (aged 15 and over) also identified as racialized.
- In 2022, about 700,000 Canadians identified as 2SLGBTQ+ persons with disabilities, with the most common disability type being mental health-related (69.9%).

The data shows that a wide range of disability types can manifest across equity-deserving groups. Interestingly, the data also points to a growing trend: Youth are increasingly likely to have a disability, which highlights the increasing need for organizations to implement EDI, accessibility and disability inclusion strategies to support their workplace needs.

SMEs should consider small, incremental and iterative changes to their internal practices to promote inclusivity and diversity, such as increased awareness of accommodations and EDI and disability inclusion training. Through these actions, SMEs not only demonstrate their commitment to persons with disabilities, but also generate results that showcase the importance of building an inclusive and diverse workplace to attract and retain talent.

### **The case for accessibility and disability inclusion**

Organizations that foster disability-inclusive environments can drive economic growth, increase revenue, profits, and productivity,



decrease turnover, and increase market share. Other research has found that persons with disabilities bring unique perspectives that can drive organizational innovation.

Disability inclusion offers a competitive advantage for organizations, especially in SMEs. For example:

- Recruiting and retaining persons with disabilities have been linked to improved employee loyalty and reliability, and reduced absenteeism, turnover and safety costs. Despite this, research shows that even among organizations that hire persons with disabilities, stereotyping, discrimination and ableism remain a concern.
- Consumers are also more likely to purchase from companies that reflect their values and principles. In 2022, the global Purple Dollar, the collective spending power of persons with disabilities, was about \$8 trillion.

SMEs can be key contributors to fostering accessibility and disability inclusion in the workplace, especially compared to larger organizations. A study by the International Labour Organization argues that SMEs are well-positioned to advance disability inclusion as they:

- Have smaller teams that make it easier to conduct accessibility and disability inclusion training
- Use an accessible contracting process that reduces the layers associated with the traditional contracting process in larger companies
- Offer a more personalized approach that allows them to establish closer relationships with their employees

## Canadian workplaces

Canada has an aging workforce, and fewer young people are entering the workforce to replace retiring workers. This, coupled with a skills shortage, has affected the recruitment of skilled workers in sectors like health care and social assistance, wholesale trade, and finance and insurance. The evolving nature of work continues to directly affect the employment outcomes and experiences of persons with disabilities.

- Remote work and flexible work arrangements have become increasingly common post-pandemic. However, gaps persist in workplace accommodations for persons with disabilities. Among Canadians with disabilities who needed remote work accommodations, 19% did not receive remote work accommodations in 2022 compared to 30% in 2017.



- Advancements in technology have improved accessibility; however, they have also created new challenges. Tools such as assistive technology, artificial intelligence (AI) and virtual collaboration platforms create more accessible and inclusive work environments. At the same time, these tools present barriers for persons with disabilities. Research shows that Canadians with disabilities are more likely to work in entry-level or precarious jobs, which are more vulnerable to automation, displacement and economic vulnerability.

## Inclusive design

Inclusive design practices consider the full range of individual needs, including ability, age, culture, gender and language, among other forms of difference, to ensure that products, services and programs are usable to everyone. They aim to meet the needs of all people from the outset, compared to the alternative approach of providing accommodations only on a case-by-case basis upon disclosure.

Inclusive design differs from both universal design and retrofitting. Universal design aims to create solutions for “most people” without needing adaptation. However, this one-size-fits-all approach is not adaptable to people with different needs and situations. By contrast, retrofitting occurs when an organization responds to workplace accommodation requests by modifying existing designs. Inclusive design instead uses a more proactive approach that integrates accessibility and inclusion into the design process from the beginning.

Inclusive design standards come in various

forms, including international and domestic standards, organizational procedures, research communities and accessibility legislation. Some examples of standards include the Accessibility and Usability of the Built Environment standard created by the International Organization for Standardization, and the Employment Standard developed by Accessibility Standards Canada.

## Legislative requirements

Canada and its provinces have accessibility legislation that provides guidelines and compliance mechanisms that require organizations to identify, prevent and remove barriers for persons with disabilities and create barrier-free environments. In 2019, the Accessible Canada Act was passed to make Canada barrier-free by 2040; however, it only applies to federally regulated organizations across Canada. The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) was passed in 2005 to create an accessible Ontario by 2025. However, an independent review criticized the AODA for insufficient resources, weak enforcement mechanisms, a lack of focus on attitudinal barriers and limited data collection. Not all provinces have adopted accessibility legislation, such as Alberta, and accessibility standards can vary by province.

## Employment outcomes for persons with disabilities

Disability is a strong predictor of employment and economic outcomes. Results from the 2023 Labour Force Survey show that:

- The unemployment rate for Canadians with disabilities (7.6%) remains higher than that of Canadians without disabilities (4.6%).
- Racialized persons with disabilities tend to



face worse employment outcomes; West Asian (44.1%), Chinese (45.1%) and Southeast Asian (47.1%) had lower employment rates than the national average (47.1%).

Employment outcomes also vary depending on the severity and type of disability. The 2024 Labour Force Survey estimates that persons with developmental disabilities face the greatest employment challenges, resulting in a relatively low participation and employment rate (53.8% and 44.4%) and the highest unemployment rate (17.5%). However, as the severity of disability increases, employment outcomes decrease. For example, in 2022, 74.9% of persons living with a mild disability were employed compared to 29.9% of those with severe disabilities.

Research also shows that persons with disabilities do not have the same employment outcomes as their peers without disabilities.

For example:

- In 2023, persons with disabilities (aged 25 to 54) with a high school education or equivalent had a lower employment rate than those with a post-secondary education (52.5% with high school vs. 76.7% with post-secondary below a bachelor's vs. 85.8% with a bachelor's degree or higher).
- The 2022 Canadian Survey on Disability found that, even with a university education, persons with severe disabilities have worse employment outcomes than those without disabilities with a high school diploma or less.

Research outlines several barriers that prevent persons with disabilities from fully and meaningfully participating in the labour market. Some of the most common barriers are attitudinal, include discriminatory beliefs and stereotypes about disabilities, ableism and workplace discrimination, a lack of employer awareness or support from inclusive organizational cultures, fears of disclosing disability status, and misconceptions about workplace accommodation types and costs.

Persons with disabilities with intersecting identities—for example, women with disabilities, racialized persons with disabilities and Indigenous persons with disabilities—often face additional and compounded barriers, such as intersections of microaggressions, racism and ableism. A DI and Environics study found that youth with physical disabilities (aged 18 to 34) experience disability-based discrimination more often than their older counterparts (52% vs. 36% for those aged 35 to 54 years and 17% for those

over 55 years). Moreover, physical disability discrimination was higher for women than men (33% vs. 29%).

Barriers to employment also differ based on disability type; that is, the experiences of persons with autism, for example, are different from those with mental health conditions, addictions or physical disabilities. For example, the Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work analyzed the 2022 Canadian Survey on Disability data and found differences in experiences with discrimination in the workplace: 21% of persons with developmental disabilities, 21% with memory disabilities and 18% with learning disabilities believed they were refused a job based on their disability. This is almost twice as high as those with seeing (11%), hearing (11%) and pain-related (11%) disabilities.

Barriers also emerge along the recruitment cycle for persons with disabilities, starting with job design, such as interviews, organizational support and workplace accommodations. Persons with disabilities who seek workplace accommodations encounter barriers, such as inconsistent workplace accommodation procedures and fears of disclosing one's disability. However, research has found that employers often overestimate the cost of workplace accommodations.

Persons with disabilities are also under-represented on boards and senior leadership teams. This has far-reaching consequences, such as limiting opportunities for persons with disabilities to engage in mentorship and networking and see pathways for career advancement. Research consistently shows that mentors and role models are important in the career advancement of equity-deserving

groups, especially for persons with disabilities.

## **Role of small and medium-sized enterprises**

SMEs account for the majority of private sector employment in Canada. While SMEs have labour shortages, they also often lack the knowledge, skills and capacity to implement effective EDI strategies, policies and practices generally, as well as for persons with disabilities specifically.

Internal organizational policies, practices and cultures reinforce barriers for persons with disabilities. Research shows that SMEs might have limited knowledge and awareness of accessibility and disability awareness, limited funding, not see an advantage in accessibility and disability inclusion, and have less favourable attitudes toward persons with disabilities. Cost was reported to be a concern for SMEs when hiring and offering workplace accommodations to persons with disabilities; however, research points to misconceptions between perceived and actual costs of workplace accommodations.

## **Tools and playbooks for EDI, accessibility and disability inclusion**

Our desk review of EDI, accessibility and disability inclusion tools found several resources to help organizations assess and advance these efforts. These tools include:

- Consulting services and frameworks that offer a comprehensive and costly approach to assessing, developing and implementing EDI, accessibility and disability inclusion strategies
- Playbooks and toolkits that provide practical resources, guides, checklists

and best practices to help organizations advance EDI, accessibility and disability inclusion

- Self-assessment tools that help organizations evaluate EDI, accessibility and disability inclusion practices

Although there is a wide range of tools and assessments, many are difficult for SMEs to navigate. Based on this systematic review, the Accessibility DAT Add-on was developed to provide an easy-to-use application and offer tailored and actionable recommendations to advance EDI, accessibility and disability inclusion.

## Pilot Accessibility DAT Add-on

In 2022, the pilot Accessibility Add-on was developed, in partnership with the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, to supplement the Diversity Assessment Tool with specific assessments on accessibility in Ontario SMEs. The purpose was to allow SMEs to assess their EDI and accessibility practices and receive tailored advice to advance their efforts. Upon completion of the assessment, SMEs receive a report that outlines the current state of their EDI and accessibility practices, recommendations for improvement and information about industry best practices.

## Promising practices

SMEs can build their accessibility commitment by implementing EDI, accessibility and disability inclusion strategies across six core domains: governance and leadership, human resources, values and culture fostering accessible work environments, measurement



and tracking of EDI initiatives, diversity across the value chain and partnerships and outreach.

- **Governance, leadership and strategy:** Organizational leaders set the “tone at the top.” By including diversity in leadership and decision-making teams, organizations embrace various perspectives on strategic issues, signal who belongs and respond to stakeholder expectations.
- **Human resources processes:** An organization’s recruitment, selection, retention, promotion and separation are key components of HR practices. Organizations that embed EDI into these practices can build a diverse talent pool, create an inclusive organizational culture and promote employee retention.
- **Values and culture:** As Peter Drucker said, “culture eats strategy.” Organizations that foster inclusive organizational cultures create work environments where diverse employees feel supported. Organizations can establish their commitment to inclusive organizational cultures through



policies and initiatives, such as an EDI policy, an accessibility policy and employee resource groups (ERGs).

- **Measuring and tracking of equity, diversity and inclusion:** “What gets measured gets done.” Organizations should establish EDI targets, develop metrics and benchmarks and track outcomes to understand their progress.
- **Diversity across the value chain:** An EDI lens should also be embedded in an organization’s value chain, including procurement, research and development, product design, marketing, communication and customer services. By adopting inclusive practices, organizations cater to diverse markets and mitigate legal risks.
- **Outreach and expanding the pool:** Organizations can create partnerships and develop relationships with other stakeholders to advance EDI. Examples include corporate social responsibility and partnerships with educational institutions, non-profits and governments.

This report provides examples from the Diversity Institute’s Best Practices Database. This database is updated regularly with best practices, with plans to incorporate additional accessibility and disability inclusion strategies, policies and practices in the near future.

## Conclusion

EDI, accessibility and disability inclusion are becoming increasingly important in organizations for their financial bottom line, yet significant gaps remain in implementation. Several tools exist to help organizations develop EDI, accessibility and disability

inclusion practices, but many merely provide guidelines, while others have heavy price tags. There is a clear need for a more tailored approach. In response, DI, in collaboration with the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, launched the pilot Accessibility DAT Add-on to help SMEs assess their current practices and develop more inclusive and accessibility strategies.

Our review of best practices shows that inclusive policies can help address workplace inequities for persons with disabilities and foster inclusive organizational cultures. Moving forward, DI continues to enhance the functionality and usability of the pilot Accessibility DAT Add-on, expand industry best practices, and develop new tools for municipalities and non-profits, including a Truth and Reconciliation Add-on, to help SMEs not only address inequities for Indigenous Peoples and other equity-deserving groups but also to support inclusive organizational processes and cultures across sectors and industries.

Moreover, given the distinctions between persons with different types of disabilities, additional research and projects in this space would further support persons with disabilities on pathways to employment and career advancement, create more inclusive workplaces, and ensure persons with disabilities have relevant and effective support. Our research also highlighted that disability rates are increasing for youth in Canada. Thus, it is increasingly important that steps are taken to support EDI, accessibility and disability inclusion to help attract new and young talent as they transition from school into the workforce.



# Introduction

Canadians with disabilities are an untapped talent pool. In 2022, persons with disabilities comprised 27% of Canadians aged 15 years and over.<sup>1</sup> Despite this, persons with disabilities experience labour market and employment barriers, such as unmet workplace accommodations,<sup>2</sup> bias in hiring,<sup>3</sup> discrimination, racism, and ableism,<sup>4, 5</sup> and insufficient organizational support.<sup>6, 7</sup> Governments and organizations have made strides to support persons with disabilities on pathways to employment and to create inclusive organizational workplaces.<sup>8, 9, 10</sup>

Research consistently highlights the benefits of organizations adopting equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI), accessibility and disability inclusion strategies. The benefits of a diverse workplace are widespread, including developing a diverse talent pool, reducing employee turnover, increasing employee engagement, increasing creativity and innovation and supporting greater market opportunity.<sup>11, 12</sup> However, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) often lack the knowledge, tools, resources and dedicated human resource (HR) departments to implement these strategies.<sup>13, 14, 15</sup> Additionally, there are usually misconceptions about the actual and perceived costs of

workplace accommodations for persons with disabilities.<sup>16, 17, 18</sup>

Various tools and assessments on EDI, accessibility and disability inclusion exist; however, they may be difficult for SMEs to access and navigate. This might be due to several factors, such as tools being built on the assumption that organizations have the infrastructure, budgets, staff and capacity to implement internal changes, not providing clear, actionable steps, or providing insufficient guidance to create operational change.

In collaboration with the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, the pilot Accessibility Diversity Assessment Tool Add-on (henceforth known as the pilot Accessibility DAT Add-on) was developed to not only provide SMEs with an easy-to-use application but also offer tailored and actionable recommendations to advance EDI and accessibility. This tool has several organizational and societal implications for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the labour market: It helps organizations support persons with disabilities on pathways to employment and advancement, creates and fosters inclusive organizational cultures, and allows SMEs to develop partnerships

and programs with the mission of advancing inclusive employment outcomes and experiences for persons with disabilities in Canada.

Findings in this report are intended for SMEs, researchers, policy makers, disability advocates and organizations committed to EDI, accessibility and disability inclusion. It is an informative resource that provides evidence of the persistent barriers to employment for persons with disabilities as well as the barriers SMEs encounter when implementing accessibility and disability inclusion strategies. It also serves as a practical tool to guide organizations, particularly SMEs, toward more inclusive workplaces for persons with disabilities by introducing the pilot Accessibility DAT Add-on to help assess accessibility strategies within existing EDI strategies and provide best practices to support EDI, accessibility and disability inclusion.





# Study Design

This report builds on previous Diversity Institute (DI) and Future Skills Centre work by providing information on the prevalence and employment and the barriers for persons with disabilities, as well as shifting the focus to the role of SMEs in creating accessible and disability-inclusive spaces for persons with disabilities.

This work is guided by the following research questions:

- 1 ? What employment barriers prevent persons with disabilities from fully and meaningfully participating in the labour market?
- 2 ? What challenges do SMEs face when developing, implementing and monitoring EDI, accessibility and disability inclusion strategies?

What EDI, accessibility and disability inclusion assessment tools and resources are available to support Canadian SMEs and larger organizations?

- 3 ? How does the pilot Accessibility DAT Add-on help SMEs improve EDI and accessibility strategies?
- 4 ? What promising practices can help organizations advance EDI, accessibility and disability inclusion in Canada?

This report draws upon the latest findings and data from industry reports, scholarly articles, Statistics Canada and publicly available EDI, accessibility and disability inclusion assessment tools and resources. It provides a snapshot of the barriers faced by persons with disabilities in the Canadian labour market and the strategic challenges organizations face when adopting, implementing and monitoring EDI, accessibility and disability inclusion strategies. It also provides results from a desk review of EDI, accessibility and disability inclusion toolkits. Last, it introduces the Accessibility DAT Add-on and highlights industry best practices from DI's Best Practice Database, a database of over 1,200 evidence-based practices, case studies and resources, to understand current EDI, accessibility and diversity inclusion efforts.





# Context

## Definitions

Over the past 30 years, the definition of disability has shifted from a medical model to a social or human rights model that recognizes societal, environmental, and systemic barriers that limit full and meaningful participation in society.<sup>19</sup> The original conceptualization of the term disability was framed by a structural or functional deficit model that emphasized the “medical problems” that directly affect the quality of life of persons with disabilities.<sup>20, 21, 22</sup> This definition focuses on the individual rather than systemic issues that result in barriers to participation in society.<sup>23</sup> Today, disabilities are seen as socially constructed;<sup>24</sup> they arise from the relationship between individuals and society, where social, environmental and systemic barriers affect full participation in society.<sup>25, 26</sup> The human rights model, based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities,<sup>27</sup> extends the social model and recognizes that persons with disabilities are entitled to the same rights and privileges as persons without disabilities.<sup>28, 29, 30</sup>

The World Health Organization provides one of the most widely accepted definitions of disability:

*Disability is an umbrella term, covering impairments, activity limitations and participation restrictions. Impairments are problems in body functions or structures while activity limitations are difficulties encountered by an individual in executing tasks or actions. Problems experienced by an individual in life situations are called participation restrictions.<sup>31</sup>*

However, no single definition exists, and recently, we have seen a shift away from terms like “impairment” that reinforce perspectives that exclude the lived experiences of persons with disabilities. Governments and organizations continue to adapt definitions to ensure that they reflect social and human rights models and recognize attitudes, stigmas and prejudices that prevent persons with disabilities from fully participating in society.<sup>32</sup> For example, Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) defines disability as:

*[A] complex phenomenon, reflecting an interaction between features of a person’s body and mind and features of the society in which they live. A disability can occur at any time in a person’s life; some people are born with a disability, while others develop*

*a disability later in life. It can be permanent, temporary or episodic. Disability can steadily worsen, remain the same, or improve. It can be very mild to very severe. It can be the cause, as well as the result, of disease, illness, injury, or substance abuse.*<sup>33</sup>

Standards Council of Canada, in support of the Government of Canada's 50 – 30 Challenge, defines disability as:

*[A]ny physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory difference or functional limitation—whether permanent, temporary or episodic in nature, or evident or not, that, in interaction with society, hinders a person's full and equal participation.*<sup>34</sup>

Diversity is an inherent aspect of human society. Definitions employing a more social or human rights lens can help foster more inclusive societies and workplaces by eliminating social, physical, systemic and environmental barriers that hinder full and meaningful participation.<sup>35</sup> These perspectives are increasingly being incorporated into federal, provincial and municipal legislation to not only improve the experiences and outcomes of persons with disabilities but also create barrier-free societies.<sup>36</sup>

It is also worth noting that human differences are also an inherent aspect of society. As a result, people experience disability in diverse ways and encounter different barriers.<sup>37</sup> For example, the experiences of persons with autism may differ from those with mental health conditions, addictions or physical disabilities. However, even among individuals with the same disability types, barriers vary on personal, social and environmental factors.<sup>38</sup>

These barriers often arise from the way environments and systems, both physical and social, are socially constructed.<sup>39, 40</sup>

Environments and systems are rarely neutral; they reflect broader societal values, norms and expectations, which can unintentionally exclude persons with disabilities.

Organizations should practise care when environments and systems are constructed to ensure greater inclusion, regardless of ability.<sup>41, 42</sup>

Several terms have emerged to reflect the experiences of persons with disabilities in society and the workplace and highlight actions organizations can take to improve employment outcomes for persons with disabilities. For example:

- **Accessibility:** The idea of providing equitable access to everyone. This involves the design of products, devices, services or environments that are approachable and usable for persons with disabilities.<sup>43, 44</sup>
- **Equity:** Impartiality, fairness and justice for all people. This considers systemic inequalities to ensure that everyone in a community has access to the same opportunities and outcomes.<sup>45, 46</sup>
- **Disability inclusion:** The idea of removing physical, stereotypical, systemic and other barriers that limit persons with disabilities from fully engaging in society. For organizations, this means implementing strategies, policies and practices that foster inclusivity, raise awareness of accessibility, ensure equal opportunities, provide accessible and barrier-free work environments and empower persons with disabilities.<sup>47, 48</sup>

- **Disability confidence:** An organization's knowledge and ability to foster inclusive organizational practices, challenge stereotypes and empower persons with disabilities.<sup>49</sup>
- **Diversity:** The differences in characteristics, experiences and perspectives of individuals based on race, ethnicity, religion, disability, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, socio-economic class and other dimensions of identity.<sup>50, 51</sup>
- **Workplace accommodations:** Modifying work environments so persons with disabilities can perform their jobs safely and effectively. Some examples include flexible work schedules, assistive technology or changes to physical workspaces.<sup>52, 53</sup>
- **Ableism:** Discrimination against persons with disabilities.<sup>54</sup> Ableism assumes that persons with disabilities need to be "fixed"<sup>55</sup> or have less value.<sup>56, 57</sup>
- **Inclusion:** An active and intentional process of addressing inequalities and creating a welcoming and respectful environment that engages individuals in all their diverse identities, values their unique perspectives and provides equal access to opportunities.<sup>58, 59</sup>

**Note:** Accessibility and disability inclusion are intertwined. Accessibility is needed for disability inclusion. Without equal access, it is difficult for persons with disabilities to feel included.

## Prevalence, severity and types of disability in Canada

As of 2022, 27% of Canadians aged 15 years and older, or nearly 8 million Canadians, reported having one or more disabilities.<sup>60</sup> This marks a five percentage point increase from 2017 (22%).<sup>61</sup> Such a rise in disability rates in Canada is likely attributable to the increased prevalence of mental health conditions,<sup>62</sup> an aging population,<sup>63</sup> and progress on the destigmatization of disability, particularly mental health-related disabilities.<sup>64</sup> However, reported rates of disabilities can be variable, in part because individuals may opt not to disclose their disability due to stigma, stereotypes, discrimination and privacy concerns.<sup>65, 66</sup>

A one-size-fits-all approach does not exist when referring to disabilities; for example, there are individual variations and differences between invisible and visible disabilities. There are several types of disabilities, and each category includes a very wide range of disabilities with very different implications. Statistics Canada provides an overview of disability types, from physical and sensory to mental health-related. Each category encompasses a wide variety of conditions that differ significantly.<sup>67</sup> The 2022 Canadian Survey on Disability (CSD) found that close to two-fifths of Canadians with disabilities had a pain-related disability (16.7%), such as arthritis, sickle cell disease, traumatic injuries and migraines (Table 1).<sup>68</sup> Other common types of disabilities identified included flexibility (10.9%, e.g., cerebral palsy), mobility (10.6%, e.g., spinal cord injuries) and mental health-related (10.4%, e.g., anxiety and bipolar disorder).<sup>69</sup>

The prevalence of disability across types was higher for women than men, except for hearing (5.5% vs. 5.7%, e.g., deafness) and

developmental (1.3% vs. 1.8%, e.g., Down syndrome) disabilities.<sup>70</sup> The largest gap between women and men was for pain-related
(19.3% vs. 14.0%, 5.3 percentage points) and mental health-related disabilities (12.9% vs. 7.8%, 5.1 percentage points).<sup>71</sup>

**Table 1. Disability rates by type and gender in 2022 (Canadians aged 15+)**

| Type                  | Total (%) | Women (%) | Men (%) |
|-----------------------|-----------|-----------|---------|
| Pain-related          | 16.7      | 19.3      | 14.0    |
| Flexibility           | 10.9      | 11.8      | 9.9     |
| Mobility              | 10.6      | 12.2      | 8.9     |
| Mental health-related | 10.4      | 12.9      | 7.8     |
| Seeing                | 7.4       | 8.8       | 5.9     |
| Hearing               | 5.6       | 5.5       | 5.7     |
| Learning              | 5.6       | 5.9       | 5.2     |
| Dexterity             | 5.0       | 5.7       | 4.2     |
| Memory                | 4.9       | 5.5       | 4.3     |
| Developmental         | 1.5       | 1.3       | 1.8     |
| Unknown               | 0.8       | 0.8       | 0.7     |

Source: Hébert, B-P., Kevins, C., Mofidi, A., Morris, S., Simionescu, D. & Thicke, M. (2024, May 28). *A demographic, employment and income profile of persons with disabilities aged 15 years and over in Canada, 2022*. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-654-x/89-654-x2024001-eng.htm>. Additional details on disability types in Canada are outlined by Statistics Canada’s [Concept Guide for the 2022 CSD](#). [Employment and Social Development Canada](#) provides examples of different types of disabilities for each category.

The prevalence of different disability types also varies by age (Table 2). Key findings from the 2022 CSD include:<sup>72</sup>

- Youth: The most common disabilities were mental health-related (13.6%), followed by learning (9.2%) and pain-related (6.7%).
- Adults: The most prevalent disabilities

were pain-related (15.2%), followed by mental health-related (11.1%) and flexibility (8.6%).

- Senior: The most common disabilities were pain-related (27.6%), followed by mobility (25.5%) and flexibility (23.7%).



**Table 2. Disability rates by type and age in 2022 (Canadians aged 15+)**

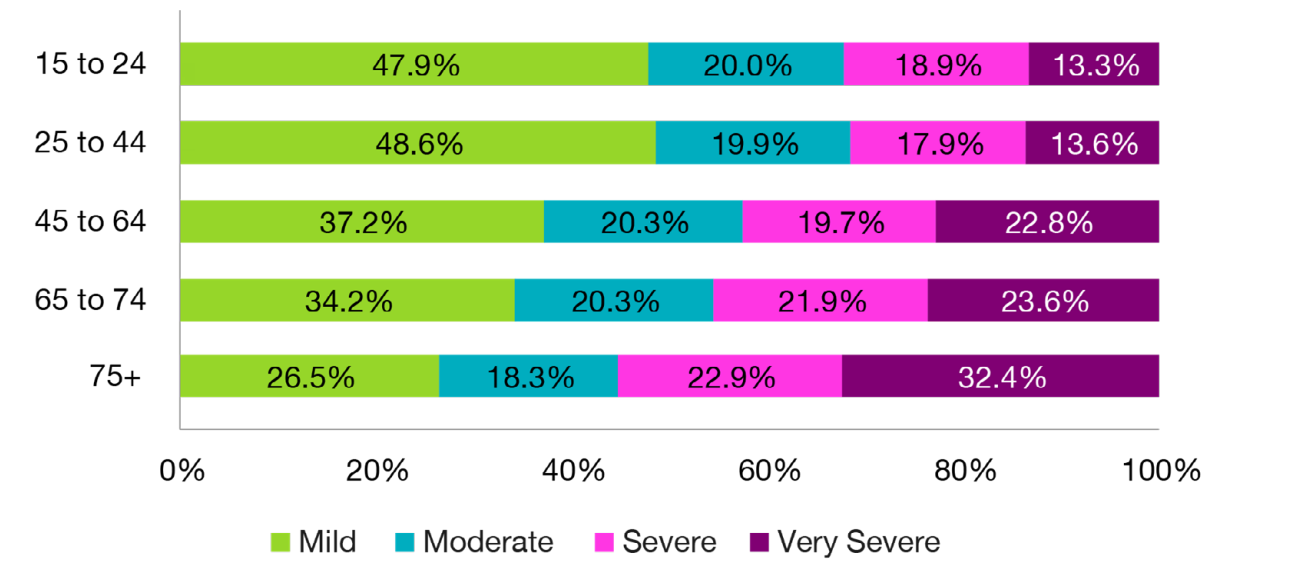
| Type                  | Youth (15 to 24) (%) | Adults (25 to 64) (%) | Senior (65+) (%) |
|-----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|------------------|
| Pain-related          | 6.7                  | 15.2                  | 27.6             |
| Flexibility           | 2                    | 8.6                   | 23.7             |
| Mobility              | 2                    | 7.6                   | 25.5             |
| Mental health-related | 13.6                 | 11.1                  | 6.1              |
| Seeing                | 4.3                  | 6.7                   | 11.4             |
| Hearing               | 1.5                  | 3.9                   | 13.6             |
| Learning              | 9.2                  | 5.3                   | 4.1              |
| Dexterity             | 1.2                  | 3.7                   | 11.3             |
| Memory                | 4                    | 4.5                   | 6.6              |
| Developmental         | 3.8                  | 1.4                   | 0.6              |
| Unknown               | 0.4                  | 0.7                   | 1.2              |

Source: Hébert, B-P., Kevins, C., Mofidi, A., Morris, S., Simionescu, D. & Thicke, M. (2024, May 28). *A demographic, employment and income profile of persons with disabilities aged 15 years and over in Canada, 2022*. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-654-x/89-654-x2024001-eng.htm>. Additional details on disability types in Canada are outlined by Statistics Canada's [Concept Guide for the 2022 CSD](#). [Employment and Social Development Canada](#) provides examples of different types of disabilities for each category.

Disability severity varies for Canadians with disabilities. According to the 2022 CSD, almost two-fifths (39%) of persons with disabilities had a mild disability, while 20% had a severe disability and 21% had a very severe disability.<sup>73</sup> The percentage

of Canadians with severe and very severe disabilities increases with age; for example, 18.9% of youth (aged 15 to 24) had a severe disability compared to 21.9% of seniors (aged 65 to 74) (Figure 1).<sup>74</sup>

**Figure 1. Disability severity in Canada by age group in 2022  
(Canadians aged 15+)**

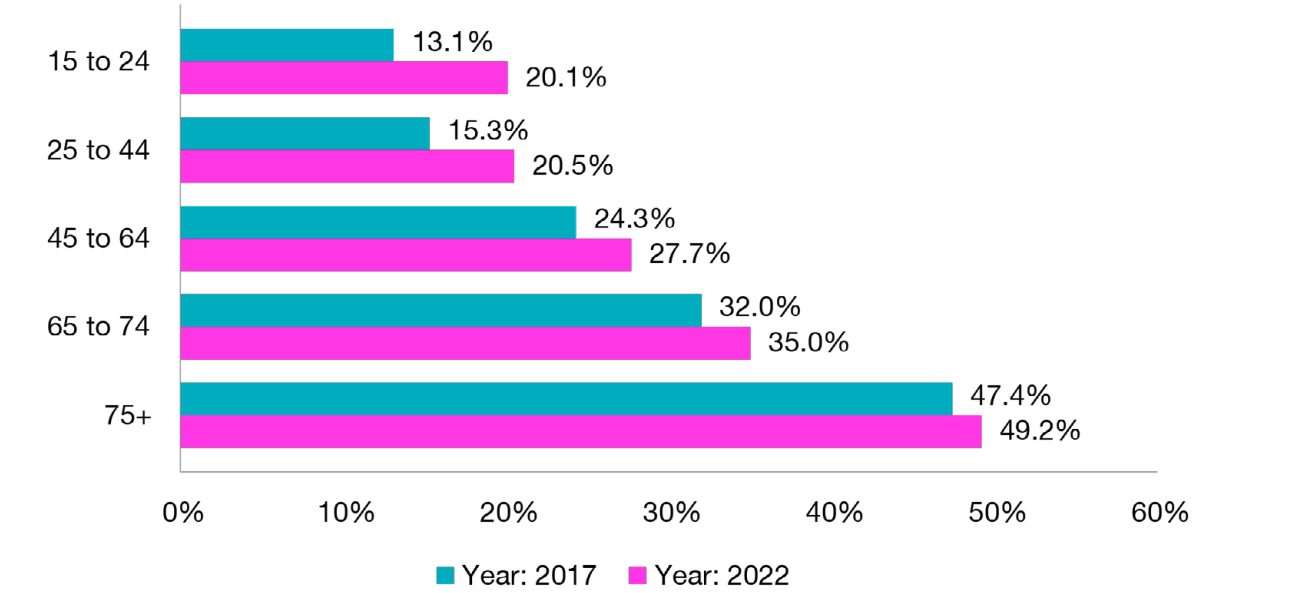


Source: Hébert, B-P., Kevins, C., Mofidi, A., Morris, S., Simionescu, D. & Thicke, M. (2024, May 28). *A demographic, employment and income profile of persons with disabilities aged 15 years and over in Canada, 2022*. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-654-x/89-654-x2024001-eng.htm>

The 2022 CSD also found that youth are more likely to have a disability. In 2022, about two-fifths (20.1%) of youth aged 15 to 24 had at least one disability, compared to 27.7% of adults aged 25 to 44 years and 49.2% of

seniors aged 75 years and over (Figure 2).<sup>75</sup> Between 2017 and 2022, disability rates have increased the most for youth, from 13% to 20.1% (about seven percentage points).<sup>76</sup>

**Figure 2. Disability rates in Canada by age group in 2017 and 2022  
(Canadians aged 15+)**

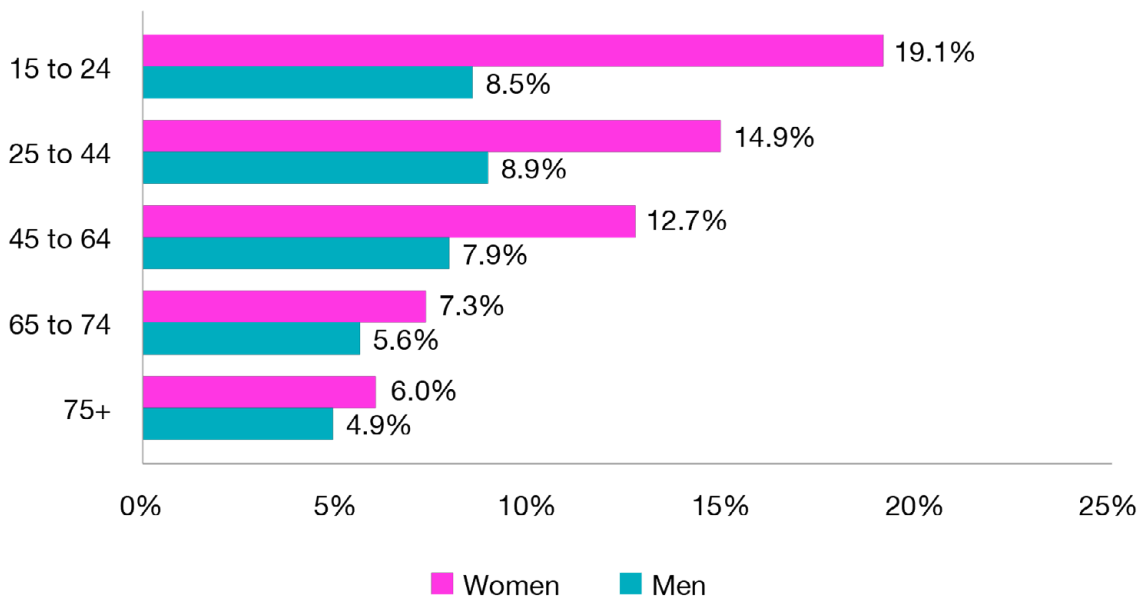


Source: Hébert, B-P, Kevins, C., Mofidi, A., Morris, S., Simionescu, D. & Thicke, M. (2024, May 28). *A demographic, employment and income profile of persons with disabilities aged 15 years and over in Canada, 2022*. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-654-x/89-654-x2024001-eng.htm>

Women are more likely than men to have a disability (35% vs. 24%).<sup>77</sup> According to the 2022 CSD, this gap has widened between 2017 and 2022. The disability rate rose by six percentage points for women (24% to 30%) and four percentage points for men (20% to 24%).<sup>78</sup> This increase might be attributed to an increased prevalence of mental health-related

disabilities among women. In 2022, about one-fifth (19.1%) of women aged 15 to 25 years had a mental health disability, compared to 8.5% of men.<sup>79</sup> However, this gap narrows with age, with similar rates for women and men aged 65 to 74 years (7.3% vs. 5.6%) (Figure 3).<sup>80</sup>

**Figure 3. Mental health-related disability rates for women and men by age group in 2022 (Canadians aged 15+)**



Source: Hébert, B-P, Kevins, C., Mofidi, A., Morris, S., Simionescu, D. & Thicke, M. (2024, May 28). *A demographic, employment and income profile of persons with disabilities aged 15 years and over in Canada, 2022*. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-654-x/89-654-x2024001-eng.htm>

Information on disability rates for other equity-deserving groups, such as racialized people, members of the 2SLGBTQ+ communities, and Indigenous Peoples in Canada, is limited. The latest statistics are as follows:

- **2017 CSD:** 14.3% of Canadians with disabilities (aged 15 and over) also identified as racialized.<sup>81</sup>
- **2017 Indigenous Peoples Survey:** 32% of First Nations people (living off reserve) and 30% of Métis had at least one disability.<sup>82</sup>
- **2022 CSD:** About 700,000 Canadians identified as 2SLGBTQ+ persons with disabilities. The most common disability type was mental health-related (69.9%).<sup>83</sup>
- **2022 CSD:** Recent immigrants are less likely to report a disability than non-immigrants (21.5% vs. 29.8%).<sup>84</sup>

The data shows that a wide range of disability types can manifest across equity-deserving groups. Interestingly, the data also points to a growing trend: youth are increasingly likely to have a disability, which highlights the increasing need for organizations to implement EDI, accessibility and disability inclusion strategies to support their workplace needs. The differences across equity-deserving groups, including persons with disabilities with intersectional identities, suggest that there is not a simple, one-size-fits-all approach to how SMEs can adopt and implement EDI, accessibility and disability inclusion strategies to support persons with disabilities.<sup>85, 86</sup>

Instead, SMEs should consider small and incremental changes to their internal practices to promote inclusivity and diversity, such as increased awareness of accommodations

and EDI and disability inclusion training. However, the process is iterative, meaning that organizations build knowledge and capacity over time, allowing them to aim toward developing a disability-inclusive culture. Through these actions, SMEs not only demonstrate their commitment to persons with disabilities, but also generate results that showcase the importance of building an inclusive and diverse workplace to attract and retain talent.

### The case for accessibility and disability inclusion

Organizations that foster disability-inclusive environments can drive economic growth,<sup>87, 88</sup> increase revenue, profits and productivity,<sup>89, 90</sup> decrease turnover<sup>91</sup> and increase market share.<sup>92</sup> Other research has found that persons with disabilities bring unique perspectives that can drive organizational innovation.<sup>93</sup> As persons with disabilities often have to navigate an “inaccessible world,” they develop problem-solving, adaptability and creativity skills that help them understand problems through a unique lens.<sup>94, 95</sup>

Disability inclusion offers a competitive advantage for organizations, especially SMEs, in recruitment and selection. For example, recruiting and retaining persons with disabilities have been linked to improved employee loyalty and reliability and reduced absenteeism, turnover and safety costs.<sup>96, 97</sup> However, research has shown that even among organizations that hire persons with disabilities, stereotyping, discrimination and ableism remain a concern, and there is a preference to hire persons with more commonly known disabilities.<sup>98</sup>



Consumers are also more likely to purchase from companies that reflect their values and principles.<sup>99, 100</sup> Companies that incorporate accessibility and disability inclusion ensure that persons with disabilities are not excluded. Additionally, by providing accessible customer service, facilities and websites, organizations create spaces where persons with disabilities can feel like they belong. Despite this, there is an untapped market. In 2022, the global Purple Dollar, the collective spending power of persons with disabilities, was about \$8 trillion.<sup>101</sup> However, research indicates that, in 2018, less than 10% of organizations globally had a strategy for reaching consumers with disabilities.<sup>102</sup>

SMEs can be key contributors to fostering accessibility and disability inclusion in the workplace, especially compared to larger organizations.<sup>103</sup> A 2022 KPMG survey with Canadian SMEs found that the most valuable tools to help them hire and retain more persons with disabilities are practical resources for creating inclusive and accessible workplaces and connections with community organizations.<sup>104</sup> The International Labour Organization's study argues that SMEs are well-positioned to advance disability inclusion and note several relevant opportunities.<sup>105</sup> For example:

- SMEs' smaller teams make it easier to conduct disability inclusion and accessibility awareness training.
- SMEs often use an accessible contracting process that reduces the layers associated with the traditional contracting process in larger companies. This streamlined approach can alleviate the barriers, such as extensive interviews and lengthy

procedures involving multiple levels of approval for persons with disabilities entering the workforce.

- SMEs offer a more personalized approach that allows them to establish closer relationships with their employees.
- SMEs can build connections with the community to make a more meaningful impact at the grassroots level.

## Canadian workplaces

### Labour and skills shortages

Canada has an aging workforce, with fewer young people entering the workforce to replace retiring workers.<sup>106</sup> The Government of Canada does not expect labour shortages in the next ten years; however, skills shortages are expected, especially across specific sectors and industries.<sup>107</sup> Traditionally, Canada's economic growth was largely attributed to youth entering the labour market; however, with an aging population, decreased birth rates and longer life expectancy, Canada will have to rely on increased labour productivity and labour force participation by equity-deserving groups in the labour market, such as older Canadians, immigrants, Indigenous Peoples and persons with disabilities.<sup>108</sup> The Conference Board of Canada notes that Canada's productivity growth is directly affected by not having enough skilled workers, and estimates that Canada's GDP would be 1.8% higher if there had been no shortages over the last two decades.<sup>109</sup>

Organizations have also experienced pain points in hiring and retaining skilled workers,<sup>110</sup> and research suggests these

struggles may continue due to advancements in technology and changes to the nature of work.<sup>111, 112</sup> Statistics Canada's Canadian Survey on Business Conditions found that, in the fall of 2024, almost two-fifths (37.3%) of organizations anticipated experiencing labour obstacles in the next three months, especially in recruiting skilled workers.<sup>113</sup> Nearly 3 in 10 (28.3%) organizations reported that the top obstacle was recruiting skilled workers.<sup>114</sup> Retention was also a concern; 19.3% of organizations expected issues retaining skilled employees over the next three months. However, differences in responses were observed across industries.<sup>115</sup> For example, organizations that anticipated recruitment challenges as a top obstacle were concentrated in health care and social assistance, wholesale trade, and finance and insurance. By contrast, retention challenges were concentrated in accommodation and food services, manufacturing, administrative and support services and waste management and remediation services.<sup>116</sup>

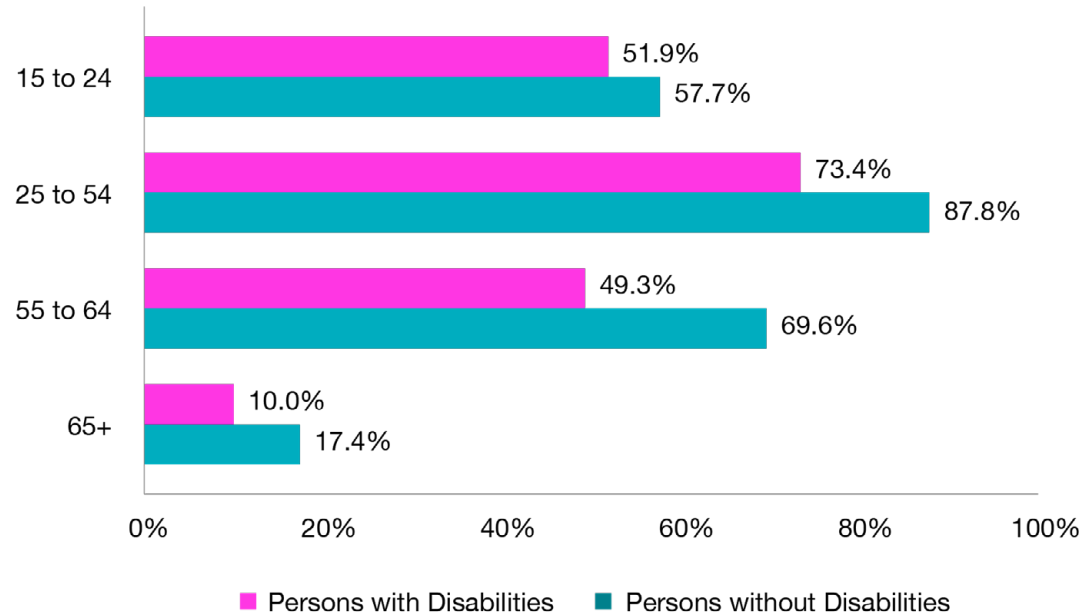
Despite these concerns, it is worth noting that skills shortages vary over time. The Conference Board of Canada explains that, between 2018 and 2021, Canada experienced severe skills shortages in knowledge-based industries, such as health care, education,

software development and banking.<sup>117</sup> Today, skills shortages affect the construction, utilities and mining industries.<sup>118</sup>

More importantly, the demographics of Canada are changing, especially in terms of equity-deserving groups, such as Indigenous Peoples, racialized people and persons with disabilities. Racialized people comprised about one-third of Canada's workforce in 2024.<sup>119</sup> Indigenous youth are the fastest-growing segment of the youth population in Canada.<sup>120</sup> Persons with disabilities account for over one-quarter (27%) of the Canadian population in 2022.<sup>121</sup> Despite this, research consistently finds disparities in employment outcomes and persistent experiences with discrimination, racism and stereotypes.<sup>122, 123, 124</sup>

Persons with disabilities are an untapped talent pool in Canada;<sup>125</sup> however, research shows disparities in labour market participation,<sup>126</sup> unemployment<sup>127</sup> and underemployment.<sup>128</sup> The 2023 LFS found that persons with disabilities, regardless of age group, are less likely to be actively working (Figure 4). For example, the employment rate of persons with disabilities aged 25 to 54 years is 73.4% compared to 87.8% of their peers.<sup>129</sup>

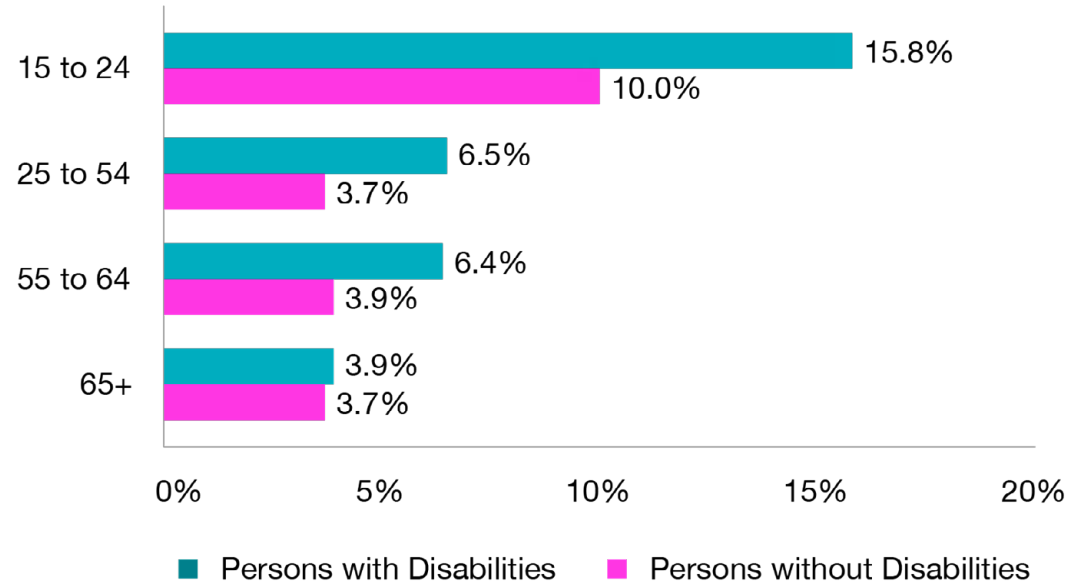
**Figure 4. Employment rates for persons with and without disabilities by age, 2023**



Source: Vergara, D. & Hardy, V. (2024, June 13). *Labour market characteristics of persons with and without disabilities*. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/71-222-x/71-222-x2024002-eng.htm>

Persons with disabilities also have consistently higher unemployment rates. For example, the unemployment rate for youth with disabilities (aged 15 to 24) was 15.8% in 2023 compared to 10% for persons without disabilities.<sup>130</sup>

**Figure 5. Unemployment rates for persons with and without disability by Age, 2023**



Source: Vergara, D. & Hardy, V. (2024, June 13). *Labour market characteristics of persons with and without disabilities*. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/71-222-x/71-222-x2024002-eng.htm>

Governments and organizations are making strides to develop strategies, plans and programs to better support persons with disabilities in the labour market. Some notable examples include:

- The Government of Canada's Employment Strategy for Canadians with Disabilities offers a framework to address employment gaps between persons with and without disabilities.<sup>131</sup> Although the focus is on ESDC's policies, the practices may be relevant to other organizations across Canada.
- Federal and provincial accessibility legislation, such as the Accessible Canada Act<sup>132</sup> and Ontario's Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA),<sup>133</sup> provide guidelines, compliance mechanisms and transparency on organizations' accessibility strategies and plans.
- The Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work recently hosted the Untapped Talent Summit to discuss career advancement strategies for persons with disabilities.<sup>134</sup>
- Inclusive Design for Employment Access (IDEA) conducts research and develops tools and resources to help organizations support persons with disabilities across the employment lifecycle, from recruitment, hiring and onboarding to professional development and advancement. Their web portal also points to a wide range of tools and resources to support workplace capacity building for disability inclusion.<sup>135</sup>
- The Centre for Research on Work Disability

Policy conducts transdisciplinary research on disability policy issues relating to employment, income security and labour market engagement.<sup>136</sup>

- Organizations that adopt EDI, accessibility and disability inclusion strategies create inclusive workplace cultures. Disability:IN's benchmark survey in the United States (US) found that organizations that lead in disability inclusion efforts have 1.6 times more revenue and 2.6 times more net income than their peers.<sup>137</sup>

However, more work needs to be done. The Conference Board of Canada estimates that improvements to workplace accessibility would allow 550,000 Canadians with disabilities to work and increase Canada's GDP by \$16.8 billion by the year 2030.<sup>138</sup> More importantly, this must be centred around supporting persons with disabilities on pathways to employment and career advancement, creating accessible and inclusive workplaces, and developing tools, programs and initiatives to meet the diverse needs of persons with disabilities.

## Changing landscape of work

The nature of work continues to evolve and change due to social, technological, economic and political factors and trends. In particular, the COVID-19 pandemic amplified barriers for persons with disabilities in the labour market.<sup>139, 140, 141, 142, 143</sup> According to Statistics Canada, more than one-third (36%) of persons with disabilities experienced a temporary or permanent job loss or reduced working hours during the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>144</sup> Since then, Canadian workplaces have reshaped working conditions and environments, through flexible work (e.g., hybrid or remote), technological



advancements and alternative workplace expectations.<sup>145</sup>

Workplace flexibility (i.e., where and when individuals work) has become increasingly prevalent during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Statistics Canada, in May 2016, only 7.1% of Canadians mainly worked from home, increasing to 24.3% in 2021 and 20.1% in May 2023.<sup>146</sup> Research has consistently found benefits of flexible work arrangements, including better work–life balance, improved mental health and higher job satisfaction.<sup>147, 148, 149</sup> For persons with disabilities, flexible work arrangements or modified workspaces play an important role in their success in the workplace. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, persons with disabilities faced barriers due to a

lack of organizational support<sup>150</sup> and unmet workplace accommodations.<sup>151, 152</sup> This trend has begun to reverse. Since 2017, issues with unmet workplace accommodations have decreased; for example, among Canadians with disabilities who requested remote work as a workplace accommodation, 19% did not receive this workplace accommodation in 2022 compared to 30% in 2017.<sup>153</sup> Despite slow progress, gaps in workplace accommodation needs vary by demographic group (Table 3).<sup>154</sup> For example, women with unmet workplace accommodation needs decreased moderately between 2017 and 2022 (42.3% vs. 35.3%),<sup>155</sup> while older workers (aged 55 to 64) saw a sharp decrease in unmet needs, from 42.7% in 2017 to 31.3% in 2022.<sup>156</sup>

**Table 3: Workplace accommodation needs by select demographic characteristics, 2017 and 2022**

|                          | 2017                              |                 | 2022                              |                 |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|
|                          | Workplace Accommodation Needs (%) | Unmet Needs (%) | Workplace Accommodation Needs (%) | Unmet Needs (%) |
| Men                      | 32.1                              | 37.4            | 28.5                              | 35.7            |
| Women                    | 42.7                              | 42.3            | 40.8                              | 35.3            |
| 25 to 34                 | 35.8                              | 38.5            | 35.3                              | 32.7            |
| 55 to 64                 | 37.6                              | 42.7            | 34.5                              | 31.3            |
| Mild Disability          | 29.6                              | 36.6            | 27.7                              | 31              |
| More Severe Disability   | 63.1                              | 45.8            | 57.9                              | 41.6            |
| Mental-Health Disability | 47.8                              | 44.9            | 42.5                              | 35              |

Source: Schimmele, C., Jeon, S-H. & Arim, R. (2024, August 28). *Changes in workplace accommodations among employed Canadians with disabilities, 2017 to 2022*. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/36-28-0001/2024008/article/00004-eng.htm>

Advancements in technology have created new jobs and further changed the structure of work.<sup>157</sup> Digital tools, cloud computing, artificial intelligence (AI) and virtual collaboration platforms have allowed for remote and hybrid working environments, and these tools have also helped automate and simplify tasks.<sup>158</sup> However, digital technologies have led to both opportunities and challenges for persons with disabilities. Assistive devices, screen readers, voice recognition software and virtual collaboration tools have improved workplace accessibility. Despite this, Canadians with disabilities are more likely to work in entry-level or precarious jobs, which are characterized by low wages.<sup>159, 160</sup> This further supports inequities in the workplace for persons with disabilities;<sup>161</sup> for example, as automation and AI become more widespread, these roles face a higher risk of displacement, resulting in income instability, job insecurity and economic vulnerability.<sup>162</sup>

It is also increasingly common for Canadians to seek jobs that provide flexibility and promote well-being. A 2022 survey from the Centre for Future Work (N = 5,869) found that, after the COVID-19 pandemic, desires to work from home remained high: 40% indicated they preferred full-time remote work, while 56% preferred a hybrid arrangement.<sup>163</sup> Respondents indicated their motivations to work from home included saving time and money, improving safety, reducing stress and increasing well-being.<sup>164</sup> Younger generations, such as millennials and Gen Z, are also driving change in workplace expectations by seeking equitable and inclusive job roles that allow them to complete purpose-driven work and have a positive work-life balance.<sup>165, 166</sup> A 2023 survey of youth in Canada (N = 231) found that young people (aged 18 to 29) value adequate

compensation, health care, free time and rest, and organizational values that align with their values.<sup>167</sup>

## Inclusive design

Inclusive design practices consider the full range of individual needs, including ability, age, culture, gender and language, among other forms of difference, to ensure that products, services and programs are usable to everyone.<sup>168, 169</sup> Accessibility is one key component of inclusive design; however, it goes beyond merely creating products for persons with disabilities and recognizes that people have diverse needs, abilities and experiences.<sup>170, 171</sup> Inclusive design can be seen everywhere, from the buildings we build and the products we buy to the learning we engage with online. For example, Purdy's Chocolatier produces packaging for blind and partially sighted people to ensure its products are accessible to persons with disabilities.<sup>172</sup>

Inclusive design differs from universal design, which aims to create solutions for “most people” without needing adaptation. For example, building a ramp for an accessible entrance into a building benefits various individuals, including people with mobility disabilities, people with strollers and people with injuries. However, this one-size-fits-all approach is not adaptable to people with different needs, abilities and situations.<sup>173</sup> It also differs from retrofitting; that is, when an organization acknowledges and responds to workplace accommodation requests by modifying existing designs.<sup>174</sup> Inclusive design employs a more proactive approach that integrates accessibility and inclusion from the outset of the design process, instead of reducing accommodations to an afterthought.<sup>175</sup>

SMEs can strive toward inclusive design by referring to inclusive design standards. International standards are one way to ensure products, services and environments are accessible and usable by everyone, regardless of age, abilities and other demographic characteristics (see Table 4 for additional details on standards and other organizations that focus on inclusive design research). For example, the International Organization for Standardization’s Accessibility and Usability of the Built Environment provides a framework for incorporating accessibility into buildings, facilities and other environments.<sup>176</sup>

Other organizations have developed internal standards,<sup>177</sup> based on best practices, for their design practices or have created toolkits to help advance inclusive design.<sup>178</sup> For example:

- Adobe offers tips to help designers create products and experiences for diverse users.<sup>179</sup>
- The Inclusive Design Research Centre develops practices, provides consulting services and builds open-source tools.<sup>180</sup> For example, in 2024, they released a framework for accessible and equitable AI.<sup>181</sup>

In Canada, Accessibility Standards Canada develops accessibility standards for federally regulated organizations. This includes standards on accessible and equitable AI, accessible service delivery and emergency measures.<sup>182</sup> Federal and provincial accessibility legislation, as discussed below, also has strong ties to inclusive design; however, this legislation is broader and focuses on creating barrier-free environments.

**Table 4. Examples of international inclusive design standards and organizations that support inclusive design practices**

| Title  | Description  |
|--|--|
| International Standards  |  |
| ASC-1.1: Employment Standard [Canada] <sup>183</sup>   | A set of standards for federally regulated organizations or their service partners. It includes essential requirements for organizations to adopt in their accessibility strategy to create an inclusive employment system. Topics covered include leadership, culture, recruitment, retention and ongoing maintenance of accessibility support systems. |
| ASC-6.2: Accessible and Equitable AI Systems [Canada] <sup>184</sup>                         | Offers standards to ensure AI systems are fair, inclusive and accessible for everyone. It also offers guidance on organizational processes to ensure AI systems are inclusive to persons with disabilities. This standard is currently under public review.  |
| EN 301 549: Accessibility Requirements for ICT Products and Services [Canada] <sup>185</sup> | A set of standards on the functional accessibility requirements for information and communication technology (ICT) products, software, hardware and services. It aims to ensure universal access to ICT products and services and help eliminate barriers to equal participation in a digital world.   |

| Title  | Description   |
|--|---|
| Design for All [European Union] <sup>186</sup>   | Outlines requirements for organizations to design, develop and provide accessible products and services that can be used by a wide range of users. It also emphasizes the importance of understanding user needs and preferences in the design process and helps meet regulatory requirements.  |
| ISO 21542: Accessibility and Usability of the Built Environment <sup>187</sup> [International] | Provides requirements for making the built environment accessible and usable. It covers access routes, facilities, signage and other aspects of inclusion and barrier-free environments.  |
| ISO 20282-1: Ease of Operation of Everyday Products <sup>188</sup> [International]             | Provides requirements for designing products that are easy to use. It considers user characteristics and the context in which products are used.  |
| ISO/TS 20282-2: Usability of Consumer Products for Public Use <sup>189</sup> [International]   | Provides technical specifications for the usability and accessibility of consumer products for public use. It also offers a structured way to collect data and objective measures of usability.   |
| <b>Organizations</b>   |   |
| Adobe <sup>190</sup> [United States]   | Offers tips to help designers create products and experiences for diverse users. These design principles include (1) understanding how design features may exclude people, (2) identifying situational challenges for users, (3) avoiding personal biases, (4) offering users different ways to engage with content and (5) providing equitable experiences to all users.   |
| CAST - Universal Design for Learning (UDL) <sup>191</sup> [United States]                      | A framework for designing accessible and inclusive learning environments and addresses exclusionary barriers for learners with and without disabilities.  |
| Centre for Excellence in Universal Design <sup>192</sup> [Ireland]                             | Provides seven guiding principles on the inclusive design of environments, products, services and communication. This includes: (1) equitable use, (2) flexibility in use, (3) simple and intuitive use, (4) perceptible information, (5) tolerance for error, (6) low physical efforts and (7) size and space approach and use. <sup>193</sup> The organization also provides resources on inclusive design for the built environment, communications, digital tools and education. For example, for web accessibility, they offer best practices and links to European standards. |
| Commission for Architecture and Built Environment <sup>194</sup> [United Kingdom]              | Offers eight inclusive design principles: (1) inclusive, (2) responsive, (3) flexible, (4) convenient, (5) accommodating, (6) welcoming, (7) realistic and (8) understandable.  |
| Inclusive Design Research Centre (IDRC) <sup>195</sup> [Canada]                                | A research community that focuses on developing inclusive design and development practices, providing consulting services and creating open-source tools. For example, in 2024, they released a framework for accessible and equitable AI in education.   |
| University of Cambridge <sup>196</sup> [United Kingdom]  | Offers an inclusive design toolkit that emphasizes an iterative process with three steps: (1) exploring needs, (2) creating solutions and (3) evaluating how needs are met.   |



### Legislative requirements

Canada and its provinces have accessibility legislation that provides guidelines and compliance mechanisms that require organizations to identify, prevent and remove barriers for persons with disabilities and to create barrier-free environments (see Table 5 for additional details). At the federal level, the Accessible Canada Act aims to create a barrier-free Canada by 2040. It also sets standards for federally regulated organizations to identify, prevent and remove accessibility barriers in employment, communications, programs and services.<sup>197</sup> Some provinces have also introduced legislation, such as Canada’s longest-standing provincial accessibility legislation, the AODA, enacted in 2005. The AODA mandates standards and compliance mechanisms for public,

private and non-profit organizations in areas like customer service, information and communications, transportation, employment and design of public spaces.<sup>198</sup> Despite this progress, not all provinces have adopted accessibility legislation, in particular, Alberta. Further, accessibility legislation, particularly the AODA, is often criticized. A 2023 legislative review found that the AODA is “failing persons with disabilities.”<sup>199</sup> Through consultations with persons with disabilities and AODA stakeholders, an independent reviewer found that the AODA is a “missed opportunity” due to insufficient resources, weak enforcement mechanisms and limited data collection.<sup>200</sup> On a broader scale, accessibility standards vary by province, and research recommends additional standards in emergency services, recreational spaces and navigation systems.<sup>201</sup>

Table 5. Accessibility legislation in Canada

| Name  | Year | Description   |
|---|------|---|
| Bill C-81: Accessible Canada Act (ACA) <sup>202, 203</sup>              | 2019 | Bill C-81 aims to create a barrier-free Canada by 2040. The Act focuses on identifying, removing and preventing barriers for persons with disabilities in areas like employment, information and communication technologies, programs and services, transportation and the procurement of goods. The Act applies to the federal government and federally regulated organizations and requires them to consult persons with disabilities, publish accessibility plans, collect feedback on plans and publish progress reports. |
| Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) <sup>204</sup> | 2005 | The AODA aims to create a barrier-free Ontario by 2025. The Act mandates standards for public, private and non-profit organizations, including customer service, information and communications, transportation, employment and design of public spaces.  |
| Accessibility for Manitobans Act (AMA) <sup>205</sup>                   | 2013 | The AMA aims to create a more inclusive Manitoba. The Act is based on five key standards: customer service, employment, information and communication, transportation and design of outdoor public spaces.  |
| Nova Scotia Accessibility Act <sup>206</sup>                            | 2017 | The Nova Scotia Accessibility Act aims to make Nova Scotia inclusive and barrier-free by 2030. The Act applies to public and private sector organizations and focuses on six key areas: goods and services, information and communication, transportation, employment, education and built environments.  |

| Name   | Year | Description   |
|--|------|---|
| Accessible British Columbia Act <sup>207</sup>             | 2021 | The Accessibility British Columbia Act provides a framework to identify, remove and prevent barriers to accessibility. This Act requires public sector organizations to develop an accessibility committee, accessibility plan and tools to gather feedback. Note: Standards are still under development.       |
| Newfoundland and Labrador Accessibility Act <sup>208</sup> | 2021 | The Newfoundland and Labrador Accessibility Act aims to improve accessibility by identifying, preventing and removing barriers that prevent persons with disabilities from fully participating in society. The Act requires public bodies to develop an accessibility plan and make it public within two years. |

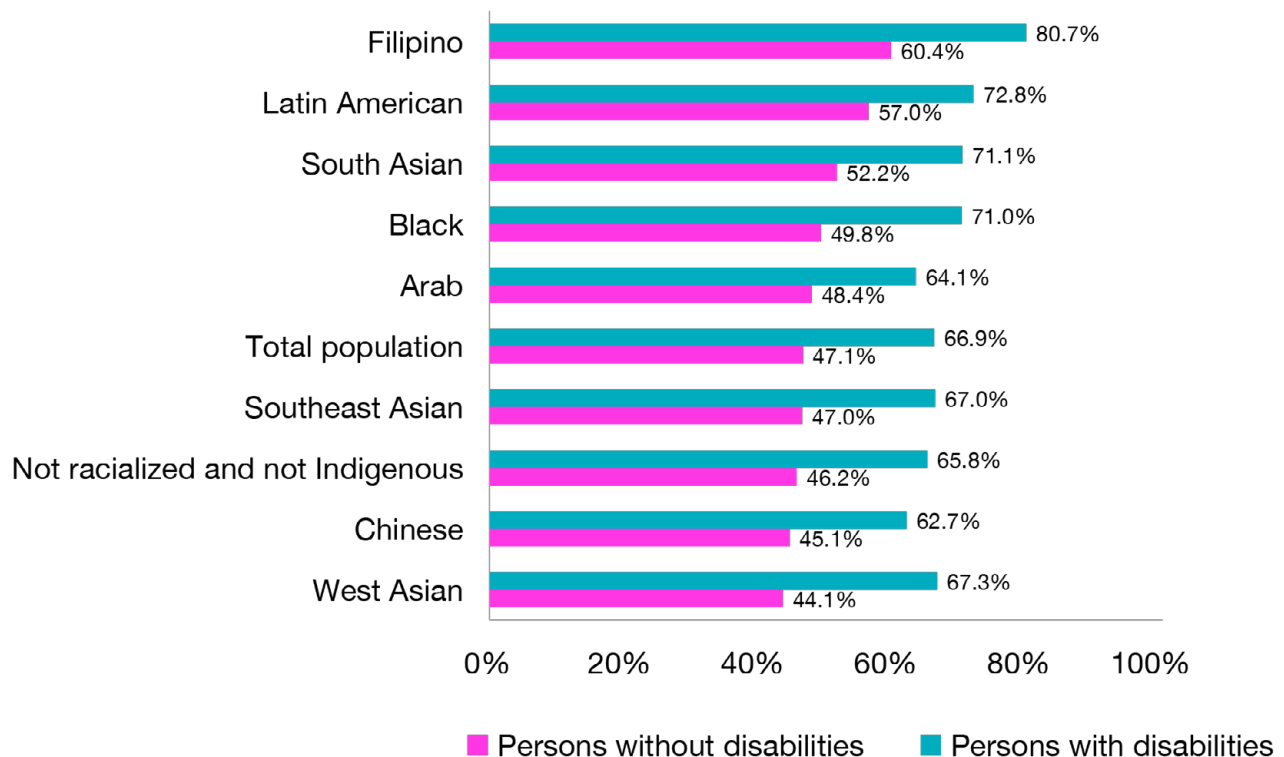
## Employment outcomes for persons with disabilities in Canada

### Unemployment, earnings and education

Disability is a strong predictor of employment outcomes.<sup>209, 210, 211, 212</sup> Results from the 2023

LFS show that the unemployment rate for Canadians with disabilities (7.6%) remains higher than that of Canadians without disabilities (4.6%).<sup>213</sup> Racialized persons with disabilities tend to face worse employment outcomes; West Asian (44.1%), Chinese (45.1%) and Southeast Asian (47.1%) individuals had lower employment rates than the national average (47.1%) (Figure 6).<sup>214</sup>

**Figure 6. Employment rates for racialized persons with and without disabilities, 2023**

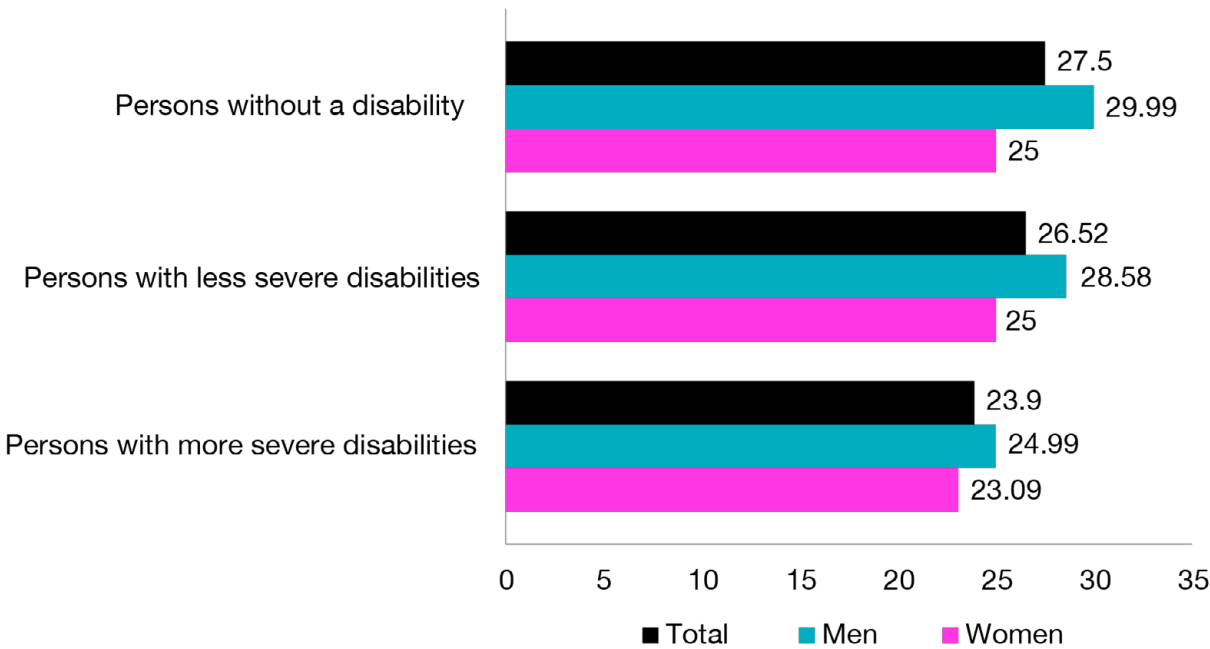


Source: Vergara, D. & Hardy, V. (2024, June 13). *Labour market characteristics of persons with and without disabilities*. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/71-222-x/71-222-x2024002-eng.htm>

Poverty is also a concern. According to the 2019 Canadian Income Survey, Canadians with disabilities (over the age of 16) earned on average \$11,500 less than those without a disability.<sup>215</sup> Disparities in hourly wages also persist, especially for persons with severe disabilities (Figure 7). In 2022, the LFS found

that the median hourly wage for persons without disabilities was \$27.50, compared to \$26.52 for persons with less severe disabilities and \$23.9 with more severe disabilities.<sup>216</sup> For men with severe disabilities, the median wage was \$24.99, which is \$5 less than for men without disabilities (\$29.99).<sup>217</sup>

**Figure 7. Hourly wage by severity of disabilities in Canada**



Source: The Daily. (2023, August 30). *Labour market characteristics of persons with and without disabilities in 2022: Results from the labour force survey*. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/230830/dq230830a-eng.htm>

Research has found that employment outcomes vary depending on the severity of the disability and disability type.<sup>218, 219</sup> Estimates from the 2024 Labour Force survey found that persons with unknown disabilities had the highest participation (83.5%) and employment rates (80.1%), along

with the lowest unemployment rates (4.1%). By contrast, persons with developmental disabilities face the greatest employment challenges, having relatively low participation and employment rates (53.8% and 44.4%) and the highest unemployment rate (17.5%).

**Table 6. Employment outcomes for persons with disabilities by disability type**

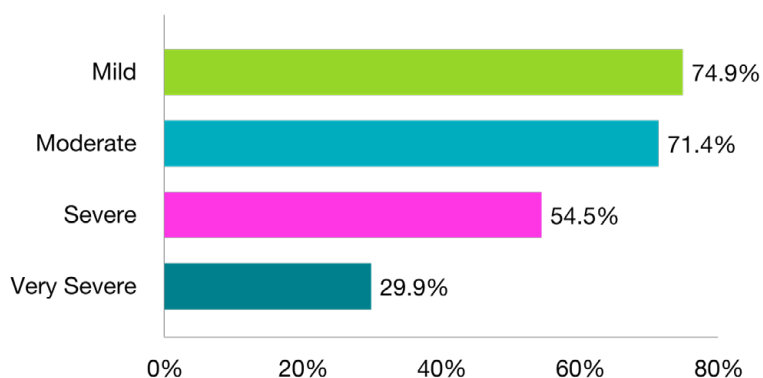
| Disability Type       | Participation Rate | Employment Rates | Unemployment Rate |
|-----------------------|--------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Pain-related          | 67.8               | 63.3             | 6.6               |
| Flexibility           | 49.5               | 45.5             | 8                 |
| Mobility              | 48.6               | 44.4             | 8.7               |
| Mental health-related | 69.2               | 63.7             | 7.9               |
| Seeing                | 67.3               | 62.4             | 7.2               |
| Hearing               | 60.4               | 65.5             | 6.8               |
| Dexterity             | 48.6               | 43.7             | 10                |
| Learning              | 64.6               | 58.8             | 9                 |
| Memory                | 50.2               | 43.9             | 12.5              |
| Developmental         | 53.8               | 44.4             | 17.5              |
| Unknown disability    | 83.5               | 80.1             | 4.1               |

Source: Statistics Canada. (2025, March 14). *Labour market indicators for persons with disabilities by disability type, annual*. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1410047801&pickMembers%5B0%5D=1.1&pickMembers%5B1%5D=4.1&pickMembers%5B2%5D=5.3&pickMembers%5B3%5D=2.2&pickMembers%5B4%5D=3.1&cubeTimeFrame.startYear=2022&cubeTimeFrame.endYear=2024&referencePeriods=20220101%2C20240101>

However, as the severity of disability increases, employment outcomes decrease. The 2022 CSD found that 74.9% of persons

living with a mild disability are employed compared to 29.9% for those with very severe disabilities (Figure 8).<sup>220</sup>

**Figure 8. Employment rates for persons with disability by severity in 2022 (aged 25 to 64)**





Source: Hébert, B-P, Kevins, C., Mofidi, A., Morris, S., Simionescu, D. & Thicke, M. (2024, May 28). *A demographic, employment and income profile of persons with disabilities aged 15 years and over in Canada, 2022*. Statistics Canada. Source: Hébert, B-P, Kevins, C., Mofidi, A., Morris, S., Simionescu, D. & Thicke, M. (2024, May 28). *A demographic, employment and income profile of persons with disabilities aged 15 years and over in Canada, 2022*. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-654-x/89-654-x2024001-eng.htm>

It is well-established that education leads to social mobility. However, research has found disparities in employment outcomes for persons with disabilities by educational attainment.<sup>221, 222</sup> According to the 2022 CSD, employment and school attendance rates are lower for youth with disabilities compared to youth without disabilities.<sup>223</sup> Despite this, higher education attainment increases the likelihood of employment for persons with disabilities. The 2023 LFS found that persons with disabilities (aged 25 to 54) with a high school education or equivalent had a lower employment rate than those with a post-secondary education (52.5% with high school vs. 76.7% with post-secondary education below a bachelor's vs. 85.8% with a bachelor's degree or higher).<sup>224</sup> However, outcomes are unequal by severity. The 2022 CSD shows that, even with a university education, persons with severe disabilities have worse employment outcomes than those without disabilities with a high school diploma or less.<sup>225</sup>

## Employment barriers and challenges

A considerable amount of Canadian and international research exists on the barriers that prevent persons with disabilities from fully and meaningfully participating in the labour market, securing employment, carrying out day-to-day work responsibilities and receiving necessary workplace accommodations. Some of the most common barriers include discriminatory beliefs and stereotypes about disabilities,<sup>226, 227, 228</sup> ableism and workplace discrimination,<sup>229, 230</sup> a lack of disability

awareness in organizations or inclusive organizational cultures,<sup>231, 232</sup> fears of disclosing disability status<sup>233</sup> and misconceptions about workplace accommodation types, costs and purposes.<sup>234, 235</sup>

Several Canadian surveys have highlighted the barriers that persons with disabilities face in the workplace. Statistics Canada's Survey Series on Accessibility found that about three-fifths (59%) of persons with disabilities experienced accessibility barriers in the labour market.<sup>236</sup> A 2022 Canadian study by the Return on Disability Group (N = 1,033) found that 43% of persons with disabilities received negative comments at work due to their disability. Among those, 65% received these comments from their peers.<sup>237</sup> The Labour Market Information Council's survey (N = 1,327) on whether labour market information helps persons with disabilities make informed decisions about their career pathways found that over three-fifths (65%) reported that labour market information was inaccessible, and 78% indicated it had affected their career path.<sup>238</sup>

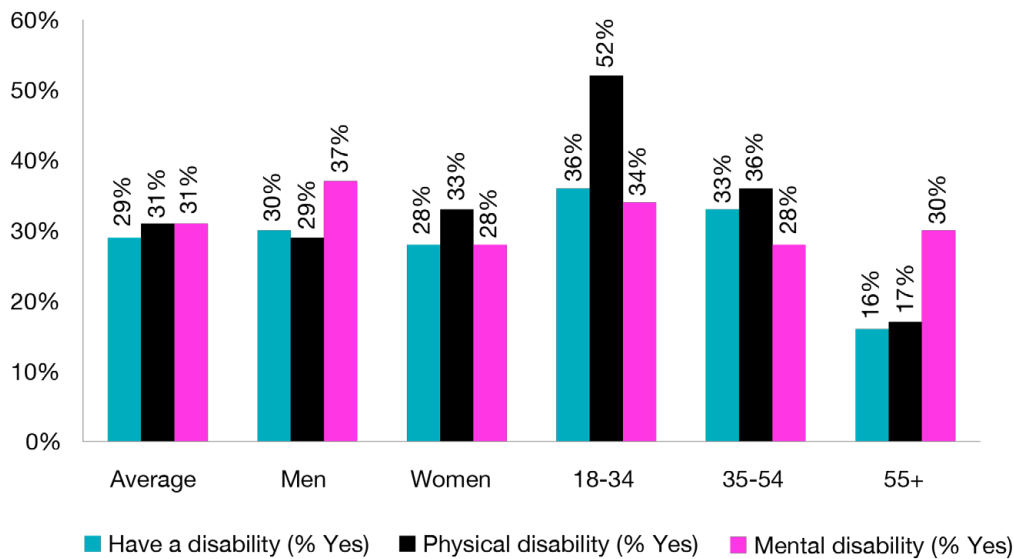
Research also finds that persons with disabilities are at an increased risk of experiencing workplace harassment and discrimination.<sup>239</sup> For example, a 2023 survey (N = 34,740) administered by DI and the Environics Institute found that persons with disabilities experience high levels of workplace discrimination in the private sector (30%), government (39%) and non-profit sectors (44%). Another study on Canadian public service employees (N = 175,742) found

that public service workers with disabilities were more likely to experience workplace harassment (37%) and discrimination (26%), three times more likely than their peers (18% and 8%, respectively).<sup>240</sup>

Persons with disabilities with intersecting identities—for example, youth with disabilities, women with disabilities, racialized persons with disabilities and Indigenous persons with disabilities—often face additional and compounded barriers.<sup>241, 242</sup> The above-

mentioned DI and Environics Institute study on workplace discrimination found that youth with physical disabilities (aged 18 to 34 years) experience disability-based discrimination more often than their older counterparts (52% vs. 36% aged 35 to 54 years vs. 17% over 55 years) (Figure 9). Physical disability discrimination was higher for women than men (33% vs. 29%).<sup>243</sup> By contrast, men experienced higher rates of mental health discrimination than women (37% vs. 28%).<sup>244</sup>

**Figure 9. Disability-based discrimination by demographic group**



Source: Cukier, W., Parkin, A., Saiphoo, A., Borova, B., Edwards, M., Mo, G. Y., Thermitus, T., Marsiaj, J., Man, C. & Samuel, S. (2024, September). *Gender, diversity and discrimination in the workplace*. Diversity Institute. [https://www.torontomu.ca/content/dam/diversity/reports/gender--diversity-and-discrimination-in-the-workplace/Gender,%20Diversity%20and%20Discrimination\\_EN.pdf](https://www.torontomu.ca/content/dam/diversity/reports/gender--diversity-and-discrimination-in-the-workplace/Gender,%20Diversity%20and%20Discrimination_EN.pdf)

Racialized persons with disabilities experience intersections of microaggressions, racism and ableism in the workplace that limit their ability to find and retain work and affect their well-being and career advancement.<sup>248, 246</sup> Indigenous persons with disabilities are not only more likely to live with a disability due to the impact of colonization but also more likely to experience disability throughout their lives

due to limited support, particularly in terms of education and health care.<sup>247</sup> Research shows that employment outcomes and barriers differ based on disability type;<sup>248, 249, 250, 251</sup> that is, the experiences of persons with autism, for example, are different from those with mental health conditions, addictions or physical disabilities.

Discrimination is a common occurrence for persons with disabilities in the workplace, and research has found differences by disability type. Using the 2022 CSD data, the Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work found that 21% of persons with developmental disabilities, 21% with memory disabilities and 18% with learning disabilities believed they were refused a job based on their disability.<sup>252</sup> This is almost twice as high as those with seeing (11%), hearing (11%) and pain-related (11%) disabilities.<sup>253</sup>

The built environment creates barriers for persons with disabilities. For example, persons with pain, mobility or other physical disabilities may experience barriers due to environments lacking ramps and elevators, or having inaccessible parking, washrooms and workspaces.<sup>254</sup> Poor lighting, limited colour contrast or lack of signage can make it difficult for persons with seeing disabilities to understand their workplace surroundings.<sup>255</sup> Persons with hearing disabilities (e.g., persons who are deaf or hard of hearing) face employment barriers, such as discrimination,<sup>256</sup> audism,<sup>257</sup> a lack of organizational support,<sup>258</sup> the lack of communication aids and technologies and inaccessible workspaces, including challenges with buildings and parking spaces.<sup>259</sup> A recent Canadian study, which drew upon the 2017 CSD, found that 38% of employed persons with hearing disabilities reported feeling at a disadvantage in the workplace, and about 10% indicated they were refused promotional opportunities.<sup>260</sup>

Research also finds that persons with autism in Canada are more likely to be underemployed,<sup>261, 262</sup> experience higher job turnover,<sup>263</sup> have fears of disclosing

their disability due to discrimination<sup>264</sup>,

<sup>265</sup> and feel the need to mask or suppress their behaviours.<sup>266, 267</sup> Reasons for underemployment begin at the job application process, especially during interviews.<sup>268</sup>

<sup>269</sup> For example, persons with autism may experience challenges with traditional job interviews that focus on social competencies and people skills,<sup>270, 271</sup> experience day-to-day discrimination<sup>272</sup> or feel unsupported in the workplace (e.g., limited flexible work arrangements and workplace accommodations).<sup>273</sup> Other US-based research has found that organizations have less interest in hiring persons with autism despite them being qualified, and many do not provide workplace accommodations to ensure they thrive in the workplace.<sup>274</sup>

Mental health and addiction disabilities are often more stigmatized than physical disabilities.<sup>275</sup> These perceptions, biases and attitudes are brought into workplaces and are considerable employment barriers. A 2019 IPSOS survey (N = 1,501) found that almost one-half of respondents (47%) felt that if they admitted they had a mental health disability to their direct supervisor or co-workers, they would feel their ability to do their job would be questioned.<sup>276</sup> Research also shows that discrimination against persons with mental health or addiction disabilities is often rooted in prejudice and negative stereotypes.<sup>277</sup> Other employment barriers include gaps in work history and limited employment experience, making the job search more difficult.<sup>278</sup>

Barriers also emerge along the recruitment cycle for persons with disabilities, starting with job design, such as interviews, organizational support and workplace accommodations. For example:

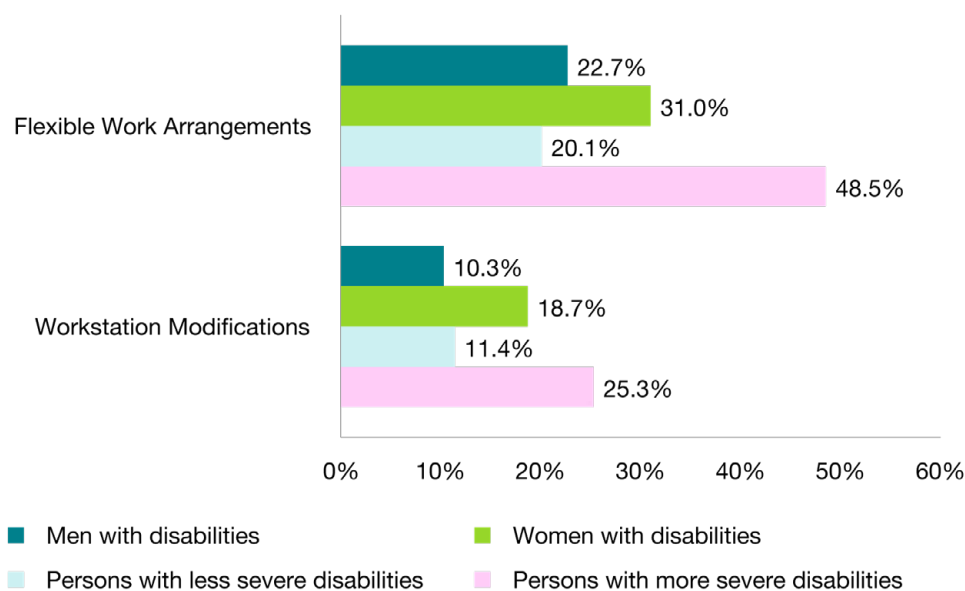
- Inaccessible job descriptions can create barriers for persons with disabilities. These descriptions may include unclear job requirements, inaccessible application processes and a focus on unnecessary skills and expectations. Instead, using person-first and inclusive language in job postings ensures that persons with disabilities can succeed.<sup>279</sup>
- Traditional interviews tend to test individuals' fit, social competencies or interview skills, which creates barriers for persons with disabilities. For example, persons with autism may find it difficult to read social cues in an interview setting, which may eliminate qualified applicants.<sup>280</sup>
- Non-standardized selection processes, that lack accessibility best practices such as structured interviews and objective job-relevant benchmarks, reinforce biases against persons with disabilities.<sup>281</sup>

Employees with disabilities who seek workplace accommodations may also

encounter several barriers, including inconsistent workplace accommodation procedures<sup>282</sup> and fears of disclosing one's disability.<sup>283</sup> One Canadian study found that employers may struggle with implementing these processes for persons with mental health disabilities. They also found that employees with mental health disabilities engage in informal and formal interactions while seeking workplace accommodation; however, challenges may arise in terms of accessing support, trust and organizational culture.<sup>284</sup>

The 2017 CSD finds that the most requested workplace accommodations were flexible work schedules (27.1%), modified workstations (14.8%) and human or technical support (6.1%). Differences in required workplace accommodation also exist across gender and severity of disability (Figure 10). For example, women with disabilities and persons with severe disabilities were more likely to require flexible work arrangements compared to men with disabilities or those with less severe disabilities.<sup>285</sup>

**Figure 10. Required workplace accommodations for employees with disabilities (aged 25 to 64) in 2017**



Despite this, research has found that employers often overestimate the cost of workplace accommodations.<sup>286, 287, 288</sup> A US-based study further highlights how workplace accommodations are typically low-cost and have a high return on investment for organizations. Survey results (N = 4,447) found that over one-half (56%) of employers reported no cost to implementing workplace accommodations, while 37% reported a one-time cost, and of those, the median expenditure was US\$300.<sup>289</sup>

Another concern for persons with disabilities is disclosure. Despite Canadian human rights law on the duty to accommodate,<sup>290</sup> barriers continue to exist for persons with disabilities in the workplace. According to Statistics Canada's Survey Series on Accessibility, 68% of persons with disabilities experienced barriers during the hiring process or one that discouraged them from seeking employment.<sup>291</sup> Common barriers included difficulties disclosing disability (54%) and challenges in the workplace accommodation process, such as unmet requests (32%).<sup>292</sup> Individuals with invisible disabilities are also less likely to be recruited or hired if they disclose their disabilities to prospective employers.<sup>293</sup>

Other research explores reasons not to disclose, including fears of discrimination and stereotypes, privacy concerns, fears of negative repercussions and concerns about employment opportunities (e.g., career advancement).<sup>294, 295, 296</sup> Research extensively explores these barriers; however, less attention has been paid to youth with disabilities.<sup>297, 298</sup> A systematic review of

disclosure practices for youth with disabilities highlighted the complexities of disclosure decisions, including decisions based on factors such as disability type, severity, advocacy skills, industry and organizational support.<sup>299</sup> For example, research on disclosure for persons with invisible disabilities found that persons with invisible disabilities were less likely to be hired, and this effect was strongly associated with those with mental health-related disabilities.<sup>300, 301</sup> Other studies explore disclosure decisions and interactions; for example, one Canadian study (N = 882) found that 44.2% of workers with disabilities disclosed their disabilities to both co-workers and supervisors, 23.6% to co-workers only and 7% to supervisors only.<sup>302</sup>

Persons with disabilities are also under-represented in leadership positions in Canada.<sup>303, 304</sup> Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada's 2023 report on diversity in leadership found that, among 427 distributing corporations in Canada, only 3% of boards had at least one person with disabilities. Representation at the position level is even more bleak; persons with disabilities hold only 0.5% of board seats and 0.5% of senior management positions.<sup>305</sup> In 2019, Statistics Canada found that only 0.8% of executives identified as a person with a disability, a percentage that has remained stagnant since 2016.<sup>306</sup> Among executives with disabilities, most held director positions (60.9%) compared to officer roles (39.1%).<sup>307</sup> Notable differences also exist across sectors. For example, the manufacturing sector had the highest representation of executives with disabilities (1.2%), while the finance industry had the lowest (0.4%).<sup>308</sup>



Voluntary codes, such as the 50 – 30 Challenge<sup>309</sup> and BlackNorth Initiative,<sup>310</sup> have also emerged as tools to increase the representation of equity-deserving groups in leadership roles by emphasizing concrete actions and measurable outcomes.<sup>311</sup> Other research explores the experiences of persons with disabilities in leadership roles.<sup>312, 313</sup> For example, a 2023 DI and Civic Action survey (N = 125) for non-profit boards and senior leadership teams in Ontario found that most leaders felt comfortable expressing their opinions and that harassment was not tolerated. However, when asked about reasons for discrimination and unfair treatment, almost one-fifth of respondents noted it was rooted in biases around age, ethnicity, race or culture.<sup>314</sup>



*Entrepreneurship offers persons with disabilities flexibility, autonomy, financial security and personal growth, and allows them to explore new opportunities, innovate and address unmet needs across markets.*

Under-representation of persons with disabilities in leadership roles has far-reaching consequences, such as limiting opportunities for persons with disabilities to engage in mentorship and networking and see pathways for career advancement.<sup>315</sup> Research consistently shows that mentors

and role models are important in the career advancement of equity-deserving groups,<sup>316</sup> especially for persons with disabilities.<sup>317, 318, 319, 320, 321</sup> For example, a qualitative study from Social Research and Demonstration Corporation found that mentors, such as managers and social networks, helped persons with disabilities form new networks and see options for career advancement and mobility.<sup>322</sup> Mentoring opportunities help youth with disabilities increase self-advocacy, self-efficacy and autonomy,<sup>323, 324</sup> as well as career planning<sup>325</sup> and social skills.<sup>326</sup> A 2020 study from MentorCanada (N = 2,838) found that youth aged 18 to 30 years with a disability who engaged in mentorship opportunities were more likely to report positive employment outcomes than those without a disability.<sup>327</sup>

Due to the barriers persons with disabilities experience in the labour market, entrepreneurship is often seen as a viable option. It offers persons with disabilities flexibility, autonomy, financial security and personal growth, and allows them to explore new opportunities, innovate and address unmet needs across markets.<sup>328, 329</sup> In the fall of 2023, Statistics Canada indicated that, of the 1,033,084 private sector businesses, 2.2% were majority-owned by persons with disabilities, up 1.4% since the fall of 2022.<sup>330</sup> Moreover, in 2022, Statistics Canada found that persons with disabilities were more likely to be self-employed than those without a disability (13% vs. 11.4%).<sup>331</sup> However, not all persons with disabilities pursue entrepreneurship for the above reasons. Research notes that persons with disabilities might be “pushed” into entrepreneurship and self-employment.<sup>332, 333</sup> This form of entrepreneurship is known as “necessity

entrepreneurship,” which refers to the situation when persons with disabilities perceive entrepreneurship as the only option based on their previous experiences in traditional workplace environments, such as discriminatory practices, dissatisfaction with previous employment and lack of workplace accommodations and career advancement.<sup>334</sup> This type of entrepreneurship is also linked with “weaker” entrepreneurial motivations and aspirations<sup>335</sup> and lower earnings.<sup>336</sup> Disproportionalities persist by gender, with women more likely to engage in “necessity entrepreneurship” than their male counterparts.

## Role of small and medium-sized enterprises

SMEs account for most of the private sector employment in Canada.<sup>337</sup> In December 2023, there were 1.10 million employer businesses in Canada. Of these, most were small businesses (1.07 million, 98.1%).<sup>338</sup> While SMEs have labour shortages, they also often lack the knowledge, skills and capacity to implement effective EDI strategies, policies and practices generally,<sup>339, 340</sup> as well as for persons with disabilities specifically.<sup>341</sup>

Research has found that SMEs are less likely to hire, retain and provide workplace accommodations to persons with disabilities than larger organizations.<sup>342</sup> A 2023 study from the International Labour Organization found that, in general, the most common barriers for SMEs included limited disability awareness, lack of commitment in senior leadership, limited funding and not seeing an advantage in disability inclusion.<sup>343</sup> Other US-based research points to SMEs being

more concerned about the perceived costs of workplace accommodations, lacking EDI policies and having less favourable attitudes toward persons with disabilities than larger organizations.<sup>344</sup> SMEs may also lack the funding, resources and knowledge to integrate employees with disabilities into their workplaces.<sup>345, 346, 347</sup> Cost was reported to be a concern for SMEs when hiring and offering workplace accommodations to persons with disabilities.<sup>348, 349</sup> SMEs also report the lack of resources and budgets to create adaptive roles for persons with disabilities due to the size, operational challenges and differences between actual and perceived costs.<sup>350</sup>



*SMEs report the lack of resources and budgets to create adaptive roles for persons with disabilities due to the size, operational challenges and differences between actual and perceived costs.*

Internal organizational policies, practices and cultures can also reinforce barriers for persons with disabilities. In 2023, BDO Canada reviewed 75 accessibility plans for federally regulated organizations to determine the most persistent barriers to employment for persons with disabilities. Some key findings included: <sup>351</sup>

- Stigmas and stereotypes discourage persons with disabilities from self-

identifying or seeking workplace accommodations.

- A lack of representation of persons with disabilities, at all levels of an organization, can lead to an unsupportive organizational culture that does not consider the diverse needs of employees.
- A lack of workplace accommodation policies not only creates barriers for persons with disabilities but also leads to missed opportunities. Inconsistencies in these procedures between departments can discourage persons with disabilities from seeking workplace accommodations.

## Tools and playbooks for EDI, accessibility and disability Inclusion

Our desk review of EDI, accessibility and disability inclusion resources found several tools and playbooks to help organizations assess and advance their efforts. We looked at about 40 tools, services and playbooks to understand what is available to organizations in Canada. They can be broadly categorized into consulting services, playbooks and self-assessment tools. Additional details on all tools and resources are available in Appendix A.

### Consulting frameworks and services

Consulting tools offer a more comprehensive approach to assessing, developing and implementing EDI, accessibility and disability inclusion strategies. However, these full-service programs often have high costs that are realistic for larger organizations with deep pockets, but usually not practical for SMEs.

In terms of EDI consulting services, DI offers consulting services and tailored EDI strategies with benchmarks and metrics to organizations seeking a comprehensive review of organizational practices, policies and strategies. Another consulting framework is Korn Ferry's DEI Maturity Model, which assesses the EDI strategies of organizations through five dimensions: (1) compliance, (2) awareness, (3) talent integration, (4) operations integration and (5) market integration, and distinguishes between behavioural and structural inclusion to address individual conduct and internal systems to mitigate unconscious bias.<sup>352</sup>

As technology advances, so too do tools to help organizations improve their EDI practices. For example, AI can be leveraged to help develop data-driven strategies that foster more inclusive, equitable and accessible workplaces. For example, Kanarys offers tools that use big data analytics, machine learning and natural language processing to help companies gather comprehensive EDI data, analytics and insights.<sup>353</sup>

Large consulting agencies in Canada have departments dedicated to accessibility and disability inclusion consulting. For example, EY Canada's Neurodiversity Centres of Excellence helps clients build more accessible and inclusive workplaces through advisory services and program development.<sup>354</sup> INNOVA offers accessibility consulting services to help organizations develop and integrate disability-confident processes in strategies, practices and policies.<sup>355</sup> Other organizations provide province-specific services. For example, in British Columbia, Untapped Accessibility offers consulting services from accessibility



plan development to community engagement. They also provide training on accessibility awareness, British Columbia's Accessible BC Act, and discrimination and ableism.<sup>356</sup>

### Playbooks and toolkits

Playbooks and toolkits offer practical resources, guides, checklists and best practices to help organizations advance EDI, accessibility and disability inclusion. These tools do not provide self-assessments, but rather resources to advance EDI, accessibility and disability inclusion strategies. For example, an organization may be seeking to learn more about inclusive language in job descriptions, and a toolkit might provide information checklists, reports and case studies to help ensure inclusive language is included.

Our desk review found that many of these resources focus on HR resources and offer guidance on recruitment, onboarding and promotion practices. Although there is an abundance of EDI playbooks and

toolkits, there are some notable ones worth highlighting:

- The DI's What Works Toolkit is a website with resources, support and leading practices to advance EDI within organizations.<sup>357</sup> For example, they have a talent process tool,<sup>358</sup> a board and leader guidebook<sup>359</sup> and a guide to organizational change<sup>360</sup> that provides guidance and resources to advance EDI within these spaces.
- The Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion has developed evidence-based and research-based resources and documents to help organizations advance EDI across their strategies, develop inclusion committees, improve hiring practices and encourage allyship.<sup>361</sup>

Our review also found that accessibility and disability inclusion playbooks and toolkits focus on specific topics, such as job descriptions, interview practices, web accessibility and accessibility legislation. However, disability inclusion is not just about hiring persons with disabilities; it involves addressing accessibility issues and fostering inclusivity for persons with disabilities.

In 2024, the Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work released a comprehensive toolkit with tools, contents, resources and guides on various topics, including workplace accommodations, environments, career development, corporate strategy, communication and evaluation, that was developed by a consortium of several Canadian disability community groups.<sup>362</sup> Users can select different categories and be guided to common considerations. For example, organizations may wish to learn



more about workplace accommodations. Under accommodations, users can choose topics of interest and receive background information, research and best practices. For example, in the “navigating disclosure situations” category, the guide provides information on how to have meaningful conversations about workplace accommodations.<sup>363</sup>

Other notable toolkits are available from the following organizations:

- The Employer Assistance and Resource Network offers a neurodiversity hiring checklist to help organizations design programs to hire, retain, promote and support neurodivergent employees.<sup>364</sup>
- Accommodating and Communicating about Episodic Disabilities has a toolkit to help organizations and workers with episodic conditions identify relevant workplace accommodations. Users start the web-based toolkit and are introduced to topics such as physical and cognitive demands, working conditions, job demands and strategies.<sup>365</sup>

Additionally, some toolkits focus on accessibility standards, particularly those set by government legislation, such as the AODA. For example:

- The Ontario Human Rights Code has a paper-based checklist to help organizations identify barriers to building access, including exterior access, interior access and signage.<sup>366</sup>
- The A11Y Project developed a WCAG compliance checklist to help individuals, organizations and governments develop

accessible web content. It covers many topics, such as headings, lists, controls, tables, media, video, audio, animation, colour contrast and mobile devices.<sup>367</sup>

- eCampus Ontario has developed an accessibility toolkit that provides organizations with information on digital accessibility, legislation and accessibility in procurement, as well as resources on AODA compliance.<sup>368</sup>

## Self-assessment tools

Self-assessment tools are widely available to help organizations evaluate EDI, accessibility and disability inclusion practices. These flexible assessment tools give organizations insights into current and future EDI, accessibility and disability inclusion efforts. However, no two tools are the same. Some are paper-based questionnaires, while others use online platforms. Some offer additional resources that target areas such as EDI strategies, best practices, training and one-on-one coaching. Some focus on general inclusion, whereas others focus on disability inclusion or HR practices.

There are several self-assessment tools that organizations can use to help improve EDI strategies. For example, the DI’s DAT App is a digital tool for assessing organizational policies and practices. Users answer a series of questions along seven dimensions (i.e., leadership and governance, recruitment, selection and promotion, values and culture, measurement and tracking of EDI, EDI across the value building, and partnerships and pathways) and receive a customized report with suggestions for improvement and industry-specific best practices.<sup>369</sup> This tool has been built to be customizable



and adaptable to different contexts, such as accessibility, Truth and Reconciliation, and anti-Black racism. Another example is the Global Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Benchmarks, a free resource that helps organizations develop an EDI strategy, track progress and identify areas for improvement. Users can download a 78-page booklet to help assess EDI across four areas: (1) Drive the Strategy, (2) Attract and Retain people, (3) Align and Connect and (4) Listen to and Serve Society.<sup>370</sup>

Other notable self-assessment tools worth consideration:



*The Diversity Assessment Tool (DAT) has been built to be customizable 34 and adaptable to different contexts, such as accessibility, Truth and Reconciliation, and anti-Black racism.*

- Fair360 offers the Top Companies survey to help organizations gauge their current state of EDI. Users can request the survey and, after completing it, will receive a report card benchmarked against industry standards.<sup>371</sup>
- Nova Scotia Works has an online tool for organizations to assess their EDI practices. Organizations are provided

with a short online questionnaire on commitment, hiring practices, employees and partnerships and asked to self-assess (response categories are yes, no and somewhat). No customized report is provided; however, the questionnaire has links to best practices for organizations in the areas mentioned above.<sup>372</sup>

There has been a growth in more specific tools aimed at improving accessibility and disability inclusion in organizations. For example, the Disability Inclusive Employer Self-Assessment Tool, offered by Open Door Group and Presidents Group, is a 35-question assessment that delves into hiring practices, employee benefits, professional development opportunities, physical and digital accessibility, organizational culture, disability inclusion training and metrics to determine areas of improvement. Organizations receive a report with progress on each question (not yet started, underway and already completed), recommendations and best practices. Organizations in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba or Ontario may request additional free support to create an implementation plan.<sup>373</sup>

Other notable disability inclusion tools from our desk review:

- The Canadian Association for Support Employment has an HR Toolkit to help SMEs become familiar with ways to support persons with disabilities in the workplace. These toolkits also include a self-assessment, with six multiple-choice questions based on case study examples, to understand SMEs' knowledge of inclusive HR policies and determine areas for improvement. Users receive an email

with their scores, correct responses and a link to a toolkit to improve inclusivity in HR strategies.<sup>374</sup>

- The Centre of Expertise for Accessible Client Service offers an AccessAbility Playbook for government programs to ensure accessible client services that includes best practices for physical spaces, disability awareness, policies, technology and language. A paper-based assessment tool is also available and allows government programs to answer yes and no questions on the physical environment, service waiting areas, client service transactions and other inclusive service design practices.<sup>375</sup>

Other tools focus on assessing and providing feedback on organizations' accessibility plans and policies. For example, the Canadian Human Rights Commission offers voluntary self-assessment tools to determine whether organizations' accessibility plans and feedback processes comply with the Accessible Canada Act and Accessible Canada Regulations. As organizations complete the online assessment, they are provided with references and resources to further their understanding of accessibility plans and requirements. However, unlike other tools, its focus is on legal and regulatory requirements.<sup>376</sup>

Although there is a wide range of tools and assessments, our desk review revealed that very few tools and assessments directly support SMEs in advancing EDI, accessibility and disability inclusion. Generally, they provide relevant and applicable information such as scores and benchmarking, customized

strategy recommendations and best practices. However, some tools were presented in lengthy reports, some assessment tools that provided scores and basic recommendations were paper-based, and others specialize in EDI only without considerations of accessibility and disability inclusion, or the opposite.

More importantly, many tools and assessments are difficult for SMEs to access and navigate. This might be due to several factors:

- Tools and assessments are abundant; however, many tools target larger organizations. They are also broad in scope and not tailored to sector, organizational size or operational realities.
- Tools are often built on the assumption that organizations have the infrastructure, budgets, staff and capacity to implement internal changes. However, this is usually not true for SMEs, who often lack a dedicated HR department.
- Tools may not provide clear, actionable steps or sufficient guidance to create operational change.
- SMEs might be uncertain about priority areas, leading to incomplete or inconsistent implementation.

To address these challenges, the pilot Accessibility DAT Add-on was developed to provide an easy-to-use application and offer tailored and actionable recommendations to advance EDI, accessibility and disability inclusion for SMEs.



# Pilot Accessibility DAT Add-On

In 2022, the Diversity Institute launched the Diversity Assessment Tool Appl (DAT App), a free digital tool to help SMEs assess their EDI practices and receive a customized strategy with best practices.<sup>377</sup> Since then, the DAT App has undergone several improvements, including customized reports and industry-specific best practices, to make the tool more impactful for SMEs when developing EDI strategies. Today, over 471 organizations have used the DAT App to develop their EDI strategy.<sup>378</sup>

The DAT App is structured around six dimensions of corporate strategy. These include:

- 1. Governance, leadership and strategy:** Organizational leaders set the “tone at the top.” By including diversity in leadership and decision-making teams, organizations embrace various perspectives on strategic issues, signal who belongs and respond to stakeholder expectations.
- 2. Human resources processes:** An organization’s recruitment, selection, retention, promotion and separation

are key components of HR practices. Organizations that embed EDI into these practices can build a diverse talent pool, create an inclusive organizational culture and promote employee retention.<sup>379, 380</sup>

- 3. Values and culture:** As Peter Drucker said, “culture eats strategy.” Organizations that foster inclusive organizational cultures create work environments where diverse employees feel supported. Organizations can establish their commitment to inclusive organizational cultures through policies and initiatives, such as an EDI policy, an accessibility policy and employee resource groups (ERGs).
- 4. Measuring and tracking of equity, diversity and inclusion:** “What gets measured gets done.” Organizations should establish EDI targets, develop metrics and benchmarks, and track outcomes to understand their progress.<sup>381</sup>
- 5. Diversity across the Value Chain:** An EDI lens should also be embedded in an organization’s value chain, including procurement, research and development,

product design, marketing, communication and customer services. By adopting inclusive practices, organizations cater to diverse markets and mitigate legal risks.

#### 6. Outreach and Expanding the Pool:

Organizations can create partnerships and develop relationships with other stakeholders to advance EDI. Examples include corporate social responsibility and partnerships with educational institutions, non-profits and governments.

The DAT App is adaptable to different contexts. In 2022, the pilot Accessibility DAT Add-on was developed, in partnership with the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, to supplement the DAT App with specific assessments on accessibility and disability inclusion in Ontario SMEs.

## Phases

The Diversity Institute continues to update the pilot Accessibility DAT Add-on by developing new features and finding industry-specific best practices. The current roadmap of the pilot Accessibility DAT Add-on is as follows:

- **Phase 1 (Complete):** Development of the first iteration of the tool and initial testing with disability community members.
- **Phase 2 (Ongoing):** Revisions to the tool and the addition of new best practices. The tool will be tested again with a larger sample.
- **Phase 3 (Ongoing):** The tool will be implemented as an add-on to the DAT App, where organizations that use the EDI tool can also complete the add-on to receive an additional report and

recommendations regarding disability inclusion and accessibility.

## Purpose and features

The purpose of the pilot Accessibility DAT Add-on is to help SMEs assess their EDI and accessibility practices, develop strategies, policies, and processes, improve accessibility and disability inclusion in their workplaces, and comply with AODA physical and digital requirements.

The tool is structured around 42 questions, with three response categories: Yes, no and not applicable (see Appendix B for questions). Upon completion, organizations receive a report with tailored recommendations and best practices to support EDI and accessibility.

The tailored report provides organizations with an outline of their current state of EDI and accessibility along with recommendations for improvement, covering all six DAT dimensions. For example, under the values and cultures dimension, organizations are provided feedback and recommendations on individual accommodation plans, emergency response plans, and digital and physical accessibility requirements outlined under the AODA.

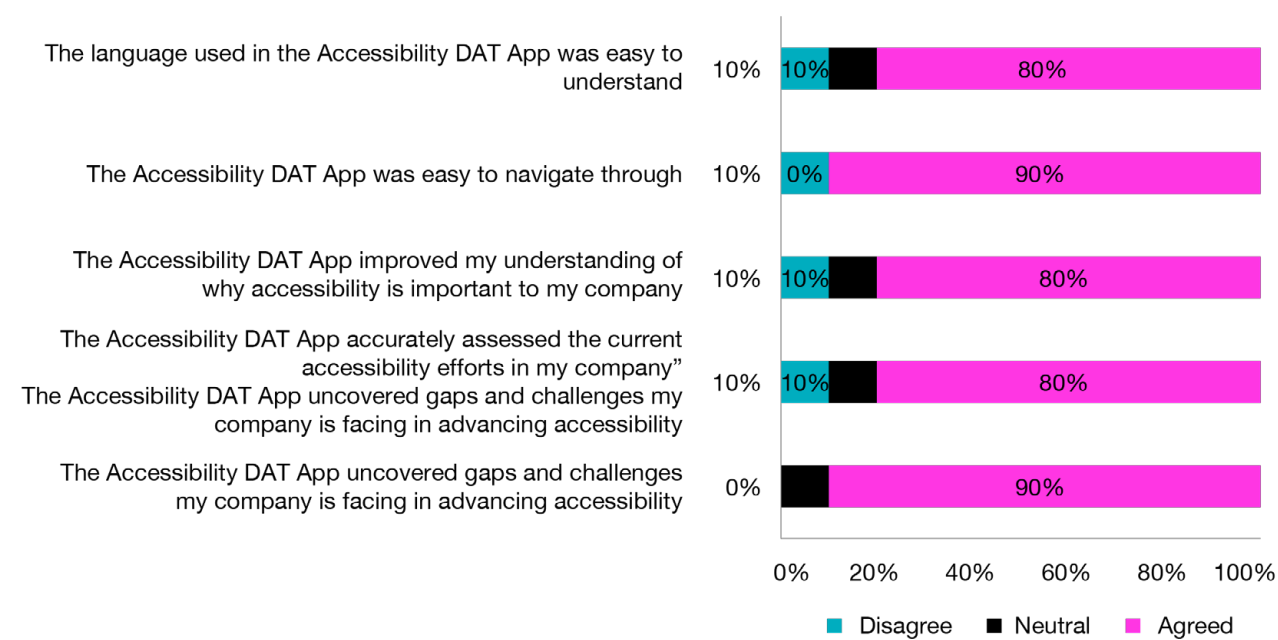
Best practices are a key element of the report. They offer examples to SMEs of some industry best practices for EDI and accessibility strategies, policies and practices. For example, organizations should have various policies to support inclusive organizational cultures, such as an accessibility policy or plan. By including best practices, such as industry accessibility policies or government guidelines, SMEs have a place to start to build policies that suit their context.

# Consultation feedback

As part of Phase 1, DI conducted preliminary consultations with different organizations to gather feedback on the usability of the pilot Accessibility DAT Add-on. For those who tested the pilot Accessibility DAT Add-on, DI administered a short feedback survey to understand their experiences with the tool, including usability, report features and any

other feedback. Although the initial sample size was small, we continue to gather feedback to refine and improve the tool. Of the 10 responses, 80% reported the Accessibility Add-on was easy to understand and navigate (Figure 11). Organizations also indicated that the Accessibility Add-on accurately assessed the current accessibility efforts in their organization (80%) and uncovered challenges in advancing accessibility (90%).

**Figure 11. User experience with accessibility DAT add-on (N = 10)**

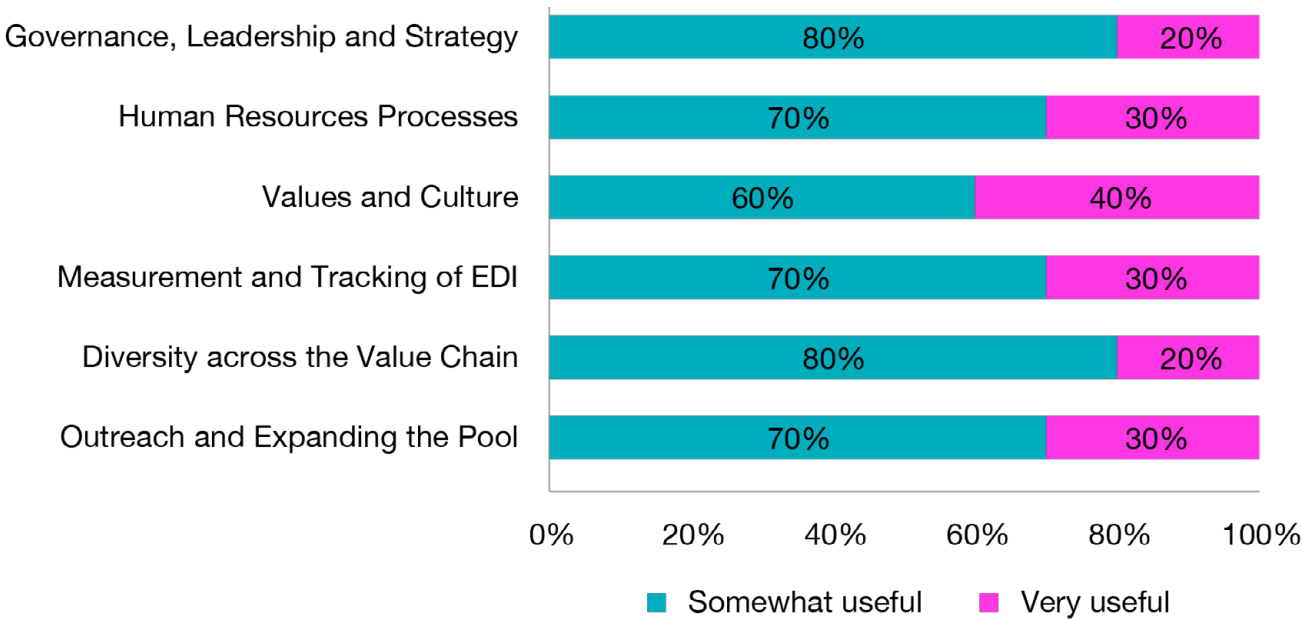


Organizations also indicated that report recommendations were useful. Of those who responded, most found the recommendations

across all six dimensions somewhat useful (Figure 12).



**Figure 12. Usefulness of report feedback (N = 10)**





# Promising Practices

SMEs can build their commitment by implementing EDI, accessibility and disability inclusion strategies across the six core domains—governance, leadership, and strategy; human resources; values and culture fostering accessible work environments; measurement and tracking of EDI initiatives; diversity across the value chain; outreach and expanding the pool—within their business operations through various strategies. In this section, we leverage findings from a desk review of industry best practices and note their impact to date. For a list of all best practices, see Appendix C.

## Governance, leadership and strategy

### Diversity in leadership and governance practices

Persons with disabilities are under-represented on boards of directors and senior leadership teams across sectors in Canada.<sup>382, 383</sup> When organizations nominate and hire persons with disabilities for leadership roles, they embrace diverse perspectives, dismantle workplace stereotypes and biases, and foster an inclusive organizational culture.<sup>384, 385</sup> Several organizations, especially in the non-profit

sector, have diverse boards and leadership teams that include representation of persons with disabilities. For example:

- March of Dimes Canada, an organization that offers services to persons with disabilities, has a board of sixteen members, three of which are persons with disabilities.<sup>386</sup>
- Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians, a charitable organization committed to increasing awareness of the rights of persons with disabilities, has eight members on their executive team; seven are blind or partially blind.<sup>387</sup>
- A Seat at the Table, a project by the Canadian Foundation for Physically Disabled People, encourages organizations to appoint persons with disabilities to their boards.<sup>388</sup>

SMEs may also benefit from formalizing governance and board policies that include accessibility considerations and processes for identifying, recruiting and nominating a diverse board. Many Canadian organizations already consider diversity in board nominations;<sup>389, 390</sup> however, accessibility considerations are

less common. One exception is Accessibility Standards Canada, which has an accessibility-focused governance policy that includes considerations for accessibility in activities, meetings and other policies.<sup>391</sup>

A board and senior management skills matrix can also help SMEs chart the necessary skills and characteristics while reducing unconscious bias and stereotypes in the selection process. A few examples of organizations that include disability inclusion or accessibility considerations were found. Additionally, some matrices included persons with disabilities as a dimension of diversity. For example:

- Health and Supportive Care Providers Oversight Authority, a regulatory health care body, has a skills matrix with 14 competencies, including public safety, change management and financial literacy. The appointment process includes considerations for diversity, including socio-economic status, gender and disability.<sup>392</sup>



*Research consistently shows that there is a business case for hiring persons with disabilities: increased revenue, profit, and productivity, decreased turnover, improved creativity, innovation, and adaptability, and increased market share.*

- Alpine Canada, a governing body for ski racing, has a skills matrix that includes diversity considerations, including gender, language and other forms of diversity, including persons with disabilities.<sup>393</sup>

As a next step, SMEs should ensure that terminology around diversity includes persons with disabilities and that governance practices adopt an accessibility lens to ensure that strategies are relevant and account for the perspectives of persons with disabilities.

### **Importance of accessibility and disability inclusion**

SMEs can signal their commitment to EDI, accessibility and disability inclusion as strategic priorities in internal and external-facing communications. Research consistently shows that there is a business case for hiring persons with disabilities: increased revenue, profit, and productivity,<sup>394, 395</sup> decreased turnover,<sup>397</sup> improved creativity, innovation, and adaptability, and increased market share.<sup>398</sup>

One way organizations communicate their commitment to accessibility and disability inclusion is through action plans. For example, in 2020, KPMG Canada launched a Disability Inclusion Action Plan to raise awareness of biases, provide education to advance EDI, disability inclusion, and allyship, and advocate for broader social change for persons with disabilities. This plan includes considerations for diverse representation, HR practices, education and procurement. To date, KPMG has made progress by launching the Diversity Inclusion Network, neurodiversity recruitment programs and a portal with accessibility resources and tools.<sup>399</sup>

Similarly, the Government of Canada developed Canada's first-ever Disability Inclusion Action Plan to improve the lives of persons with disabilities, which includes five objectives: (1) enhance social and economic inclusion and opportunities for persons with disabilities, (2) alleviate issues of poverty for persons with disabilities, (3) create a barrier-free Canada by 2040, (4) establish a unified and consistent approach to disability inclusion across the federal government and (5) promote a culture of inclusion.<sup>400</sup> However, to date, there have been no updates on progress.

Other organizations use external-facing digital materials to demonstrate their commitment to accessibility and disability inclusion. For example, Accenture, a global professional service organization, has a diversity and inclusion website that contains information on its commitment to EDI, accessibility and disability inclusion in areas such as talent strategy, organizational culture and community. They also present the stories of several leaders and employees with disabilities. For example, one leader channels their neurodiversity into not only synthesizing complex information but also supporting their team's performance.<sup>401</sup> Additionally, in 2018, Accenture partnered with Disability:IN and the American Association of People with Disabilities to research best practices for supporting persons with disabilities in the workplace.<sup>402</sup> The Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability also provides seven ways to highlight their commitment to disability inclusion, including through policy statements, ERGs, flexible work arrangement and inclusive workplace accommodation processes.<sup>403</sup>

Advisory committees bring together expertise and experience to work on issues related to EDI, accessibility and disability inclusion. For example:

- Inclusive Design for Employment Access (IDEA), a social innovation laboratory, aims to strengthen the capacity of Canadian organizations to fully and meaningfully include persons with disabilities.<sup>404</sup> Its advisory committee comprises 20 individuals across different organizations, sectors and industries, each bringing a unique perspective to advance accessibility, inclusive design and disability inclusion in the Canadian labour market.<sup>405</sup>
- The Centre for Research on Work Disability Policy (CRWDP) conducts transdisciplinary research on work disability policy in Canada and provides policy and program recommendations to improve employment outcomes for persons with disabilities in Canada (Appendix D contains a list of partners).<sup>406</sup> CRWDP's community caucus initiated the Disability and Work in Canada Conference and Strategy, which has become an entity unto itself and hosts an annual community and stakeholder conference, and developed a civil society strategy on disability and work in Canada.<sup>407</sup>

SMEs can further demonstrate their commitment to EDI, accessibility and disability inclusion by voluntarily signing up for the Government of Canada's 50 – 30 Challenge. The goal is for organizations to strive toward gender parity (50% women and/or non-binary people) on boards and in senior leadership as well as significant representation (30%) of other equity-deserving groups, including

persons with disabilities, on their boards or senior leadership teams.<sup>408</sup>

## Human resource practices

Human resource practices should consider not only EDI but also the needs of persons with disabilities. SMEs may consider alternative job application methods, unconscious bias and anti-ableist training for staff and managers, flexible work arrangements and professional development opportunities to help support persons with disabilities in the workplace.

### Inclusive recruitment

Job postings are the first step in creating inclusive hiring practices. Organizations should include various features in these postings, including person-first language, statements of reasonable accommodations and options for different formats for application submissions.

Statements of reasonable accommodations promote equitable and non-discriminatory hiring practices. Many Canadian organizations already incorporate these statements in job postings. One example is Righteous Gelato, a food services organization, which uses a statement of reasonable accommodation to not only promote a barrier-free application process but also encourage persons with disabilities to apply.<sup>409</sup>

Interviews are also a key component of the hiring process; however, interviews tend to test interviewing skills and behaviours of individuals, which can lead to barriers for persons with disabilities.<sup>410, 411</sup> SMEs can consider alternate interview formats, such as providing interview questions in advance and offering alternative formats to answer



questions. Some examples of organizations that employ these practices include:

- The Abilities Centre, which uses various transparent job application and interview practices, such as person-first language in job postings, alternate formats to answer pre-screening questions (e.g., in-person, phone call, virtual, voice note) and the removal of redundancies from job postings and communications with candidates.<sup>412</sup>
- auticon Canada, which offers technology careers for professionals with autism, uses a four-step interview process, including application, informal interview, technical interview and skills interview.<sup>413</sup>

Inclusive recruitment strategies are another way to attract and retain persons with disabilities. One strategy is to partner with non-profit and community organizations to attract, hire and retain persons with disabilities. Our review of Canadian organizations found few examples of recruitment strategies. Examples include:



- Royal Bank of Canada, a large financial institution, has partnered with Career Edge to provide work experience to persons with disabilities. Since 1999, they have provided 6- to 12-month internship positions to over 200 persons with disabilities.<sup>416</sup>
- The Government of Canada offers the Federal Internship Program for Canadians with Disabilities, which provides 18-month internships in the federal public service. From April 2019 to March 2024, the program has provided internship opportunities to 125 Canadians with disabilities.
- Smart & Biggar has mandatory e-learning about accessibility for persons with disabilities and regularly communicates with internal employees about accessibility issues.<sup>420</sup>

Our review found few organizations that provide standalone disability inclusion training. Many Canadian organizations offer EDI training, which might include topics related to disability inclusion. One exception is KPMG, which offers mental health, mental resilience training and health resilience training as part of its Disability Inclusion Action Plan.<sup>421</sup>

## Values and culture

Organizations that foster inclusive organizational culture create an environment where equity-deserving employees, including persons with disabilities, feel respected and supported.<sup>422</sup> SMEs can adopt policies, programs and initiatives, such as accessibility policies, accommodations plans and employee resource groups (ERGs), to not only enhance employee experience but also achieve strategic EDI, accessibility and disability inclusion priorities.

### Accessibility plans

Accessibility policies and multi-year plans not only demonstrate an organization's commitment to creating barrier-free environments but also establish practices to achieve accessibility goals. In Ontario, the AODA requires organizations to create policies and practices that identify, remove and prevent barriers for employees with disabilities.<sup>423</sup> However, not all Canadian provinces have adopted accessibility legislation, while others only apply to specific

### Accessibility and disability inclusion training

Training is a tool SMEs can use to advance EDI, accessibility and disability inclusion. Many organizations in Ontario offer accessibility training to all employees as part of the requirements to meet AODA standards. A review of accessibility plans found several instances of this, including the following:

- Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses, a non-profit, trains all employees on Ontario's AODA and Canada's Human Rights Code.<sup>417</sup>
- Cineflix Media ensures that all employees receive training on Ontario's AODA. They also offer EDI training, speaker panels and other training to create a more inclusive culture.<sup>418</sup>
- Fengate Asset Management offers accessibility training to all employees and individuals participating in policy development or goods and services.<sup>419</sup>



sectors.<sup>424</sup> Our review found several best practices, including the following:

- BenchSci, a Toronto-based health care technology SME, has a multi-year accessibility plan that aims to prevent and remove accessibility barriers. It includes considerations for employees with disabilities, such as individualized emergency response information, digital accessibility standards, such as WCAG 2.0, and flexible working options.<sup>425</sup>
- Cohen Highley Lawyers' accessibility plan provides a detailed breakdown of activities and actions related to AODA standards and their progress. For example, in the design of public spaces, they review construction plans to ensure they meet the requirements of the Integrated Accessibility Standards.<sup>426</sup>
- Cineflix Media's multi-year accessibility plan outlines its commitment to inclusive training, employment, communications and design of public spaces. The policy provides additional information on training, assistive devices, service animals, EDI-related training and mechanisms for feedback from persons with disabilities.<sup>427</sup>

Digital accessibility is increasingly relevant in workplaces and the sales of goods and services. The AODA has set standards on digital accessibility to ensure that persons with disabilities have equal access to digital environments. Although these standards are generally incorporated in accessibility plans and policies, some organizations have standalone digital accessibility policies. For example, HSBC is committed to offering a website accessible to all, aims to meet the AODA's WCAG standards<sup>428</sup> and is accessible to persons with disabilities who use assistive technology.<sup>429</sup>

### Workplace accommodation processes

Workplace accommodations allow persons with disabilities to complete their work in a way that best suits their needs.<sup>430</sup> Our review of Canadian organizations found that many organizations provide a statement of reasonable accommodations for applicants; however, few provide details on the accommodation process for employees with disabilities. For example:

- Fengate has a comprehensive procedure for workplace accommodations for employees with disabilities. This four-step process results in formal, individual accommodation plans that are monitored and reviewed.<sup>431</sup>
- RFA Bank is committed to creating fair and accessible employment practices, including individual accommodation and return-to-work plans for persons with disabilities.<sup>432</sup>

### Employee resource groups

ERGs are another way to create inclusive and

supportive organizational cultures for persons with disabilities. Many large organizations have dedicated budgets and organizational support for ERGs. For example:

- KPMG has created a Disability Inclusion Network to support persons with disabilities, which not only provides persons with disabilities a community but also a space to improve and advance education and awareness across the organization.<sup>433</sup>
- Computershare Trust Company of Canada, a global financial services company, offers seven ERGs, including the Black Leadership Group, Women4Women, Purple Pride, Mental Health and Wellbeing and the DisABILITY Resource Group.<sup>434</sup>
- Proctor and Gamble Canada, a subsidiary of a multinational manufacturer, has several ERGs that are employee-led and funded by the organization, including the People with Disabilities Network.<sup>435</sup>

## Measurement and tracking of EDI

SMEs can measure EDI, accessibility and disability inclusion progress by tracking workforce representation, employee engagement and hiring practices. Key performance indicators (KPIs), such as diversity in leadership, employee turnover and diversity in promotions, are part of this process. Based on our review, only some organizations track accessibility and disability inclusion metrics. For example:

- The Government of Canada leads the way as they track the progress of their Accessibility Strategy for the Public

Service of Canada. One goal of this strategy is to improve the “recruitment, retention and promotion of persons with disabilities,” and one related KPI is a 6% annual promotion rate for persons with disabilities. In 2023, the Government of Canada had a 4.1% annual promotion rate for persons with disabilities.<sup>436</sup>

- Through the ACA, federally regulated organizations must publish accessibility plans. For large organizations, with 100 or more employees, plans must be available by June 1, 2023, and for small businesses, with 10 to 99 employees, plans must be published by June 1, 2024. Organizations must also submit progress reports on implementation of their plans, which include demonstrating how they consulted persons with disabilities and how the feedback they receive was considered.<sup>437</sup>
- The Ontario Disability Employment Network, an organization which provides employment services to organizations, also tracks disability inclusion metrics, including the number of organizations they supported in developing diversity inclusion strategies (i.e., seven from 2020 to 2021) and the number of organizations they trained on inclusive hiring practices (i.e., 106 from 2020 to 2021).<sup>438</sup>
- Kaiser Permanente, a physician group, has received a score of 100% on the Disability:IN's Disability Equality Index, which benchmarks organizations based on culture, leadership, accessibility, employment practices, community engagement and supplier diversity.<sup>439</sup>

Employee engagement surveys are another valuable tool to track and measure employees'

sense of belonging.<sup>440</sup> These collect data and insights to identify employee barriers and inform strategic decisions. However, collecting demographic data must be done with caution, especially in smaller organizations where all employees know each other. To address this, organizations should remain thoughtful of data collection methods or use a third party.

## Diversity across the value chain

The value chain consists of activities that translate inputs (e.g., labour) to outputs (e.g., services).<sup>441</sup> SMEs can embed EDI, accessibility and disability inclusion into business practices, such as procurements, product design and customer service, to access new, diverse markets and reduce reputational risks.



*SMEs can embed EDI, accessibility and disability inclusion into business practices, such as procurements, product design and customer service, to access new, diverse markets and reduce reputational risks.*

### Procurement

1. Procurement consists of an organization's capacity to transform inputs into outputs. SMEs can integrate accessibility at each stage to advance EDI, accessibility and

disability inclusion. Our review found few examples of supplier diversity programs or procurement policies with accessibility and disability inclusion considerations. One notable example is the Inclusive Workplace and Supply Council of Canada, which certifies businesses as majority-owned and operated by persons with disabilities or veterans.<sup>442</sup> As for examples of Canadian businesses, Telus' Supplier Diversity Program does encourage equity-deserving groups, including persons with disabilities, to bid for businesses,<sup>443</sup> and eCampus Ontario outlines key considerations for accessible digital content and development services to ensure organizations consider accessibility criteria and standards at each phase of the procurement process.<sup>444</sup>

### Accessible customer service

SMEs can also ensure respectful customer service for persons with disabilities by adopting accessible customer service policies and professional development opportunities. In Ontario, the AODA requires organizations to be trained in accessible customer service and have a process for receiving feedback. As such, there are a plethora of examples of these practices. Some of these include:

- Usage Guides: Motus Bank provides a list of keyboard shortcuts for PCs and MACs for seniors to access financial information.<sup>445</sup>
- Use of Feedback Forms: CBC Radio uses a feedback form to collect information on content accessibility, digital accessibility and facilities from persons with disabilities.<sup>446</sup>

- Professional Development: Bimbo Canada<sup>447</sup> outlines training requirements for individuals in customer service roles in their accessibility policies.

## Outreach and expanding the pool

SMEs' activities extend beyond their internal operations to outreach and partnerships. This may include engaging with external organizations to create new opportunities for persons with disabilities and eliminate barriers to meaningful participation in the labour market. Our review of Canadian organizations found some partnerships supporting persons with disabilities. For example:

- Accessible Media Inc. has the AMI Robert Pearson Memorial Scholarship, which provides \$5,000 bursaries to persons with disabilities registered in and returning to a full-time program at an accredited Canadian post-secondary college or university. This initiative has been active since 2012 and has awarded bursaries to 26 Canadian students with disabilities.<sup>448</sup>
- The Ontario Disability Employment Network has several research collaborations, including partnering with the Canadian Association for Supported Employment March of Dimes to deliver MentorAbility. This program matches job



seekers with disabilities with employers to explore career pathways, options and opportunities. Between 2020 and 2021, the program facilitated 69 matches, and 20 were hired.<sup>449</sup>

These are only select examples from the DI's Best Practices Database, highlighting leading organizational programs, policies and practices from Canada and abroad that can advance EDI, accessibility and disability inclusion across sectors and industries. This database is updated regularly with best practices, with plans to incorporate additional accessibility and disability inclusion practices in the near future.





# Conclusion

EDI, accessibility and disability inclusion are becoming increasingly important in organizations, especially for their financial bottom line. However, gaps in implementation remain. The Diversity Institute released the pilot Accessibility DAT Add-on in response to SMEs' growing challenges in implementing accessibility and disability inclusion strategies.

Our desk review revealed that very few tools directly support SMEs, so the pilot Accessibility DAT Add-on helped address a considerable gap. Our research also found several promising industry practices. These policies, programs and initiatives not only help address inequities within organizations, but also drive change, build accessibility and disability-inclusive environments, and promote inclusive organizational cultures for persons with disabilities.

There are opportunities to explore new tools and best practices to support accessibility and disability inclusion. The Diversity Institute remains committed to further improving the functionality and usability of the pilot Accessibility DAT Add-on, and to increase

industry-specific best practices available to organizations. As next steps, DI intends to build additional use cases, including for municipalities and non-profits, and, in 2026, the Truth and Reconciliation Add-on, to help SMEs not only address inequities for Indigenous Peoples and other equity-deserving groups in organizations but also support inclusive organizational processes and cultures.

Additionally, given the distinctions between persons with different types of disabilities, additional research and projects in this space would further support persons with disabilities on pathways to employment and career advancement, create more inclusive workplaces and ensure persons with disabilities have relevant and effective support. Moreover, research indicates that disability rates are increasing for youth in Canada; thus, it is increasingly important that organizations can support persons with disabilities and implement accessibility and disability inclusion strategies to attract new and young talent as they transition from school into the workforce.

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<sup>a</sup> The standalone Diversity Assessment Tool (DAT) App can be accessed online at [www.diversityassessment.ca](http://www.diversityassessment.ca). The Accessibility DAT Add-on was in a testing phase and will be added into the standalone DAT App at a later date.

# Appendix A: EDI, Accessibility and Disability Inclusion Tools

**Table A1. List of EDI, accessibility and disability inclusion tools, frameworks and resources**

| Name  | Description   |
|---|---|
| <b>Consulting Frameworks and Services</b>                                   |   |
| <u><a href="#">Abilities Centre - Accessibility Consulting</a></u>          | Offers accessibility consulting to organizations to help them create barrier-free environments. This includes developing customized improvement plans, workshops and other forms of professional development.   |
| <u><a href="#">Accessibility Partners Canada - Consulting</a></u>           | Offers consulting services to Canadian organizations seeking to align with accessibility standards. They also conduct compliance audits and gaps assessment to establish plans and policies, provide training on accessibility, and use AI to simplify processes.   |
| <u><a href="#">BDO Canada - Accessibility Consulting</a></u>                | Offers accessibility consulting to help organizations develop comprehensive accessibility programs.   |
| <u><a href="#">Catalyst - EDI Tools</a></u>                                 | Offers paid research-backed tools, events and webinars to help advance EDI in organizations.  |
| <u><a href="#">Disability:IN - Consulting Services</a></u>                  | Offers consulting services for organizations seeking to improve disability inclusion.   |
| <u><a href="#">INNoVA - Accessibility Consulting</a></u>                    | Offers accessibility consulting to organizations seeking to design, deliver and integrate disability-confident processes in their workplaces. They conduct audits that assess, analyze and discover successes and areas for opportunities using evidence-based metrics and emerging best practices.                           |
| <u><a href="#">Kanarys - Building Workplaces where Everyone Belongs</a></u> | Offers several tools to help companies gather comprehensive EDI data, analytics and insights, including Equity Innovation Solution, Supplier DEI Assessment and Organizational Systems Assessment, to diagnose and improve EDI efforts. These tools use big data analytics, machine learning and natural language processing. |

| Name  | Description   |
|---|---|
| <a href="#"><u>Korn Ferry - DEI Maturity Model</u></a>  | Korn Ferry's DEI Maturity Model is a consulting tool that helps organizations assess their EDI strategies through evaluations, benchmarking and tailored recommendations.   |
| <a href="#"><u>KPMG - Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Consulting Services</u></a>                 | Offers EDI consulting services to help organizations develop strategies to maximize performance and empower workers.  |
| <a href="#"><u>Paradigm - DEI Analytics, Maturity, and Benchmarking Platform</u></a>              | Offers a consulting-based platform for Fortune 500 companies. It primarily focuses on metrics and benchmarking. Users can engage in meetings, strategy sessions and advising.   |
| <a href="#"><u>Untapped Accessibility - Consulting Services</u></a>                               | Offers consulting services, ranging from accessibility plan development to community engagement, to help organizations design practical and relevant solutions. They also provide training on accessibility awareness, British Columbia's Accessible BC Act, and discrimination and ableism.  |
| <b>Self-Assessment Tools</b>  |   |
| <a href="#"><u>All-In Diversity Project - All-Index</u></a>                                       | A global measurement tool for the betting and gaming sector. The tool collects data from participating companies, analyzes it, generates a benchmark report and highlights areas of strength and opportunities for improvement. It also offers an index to note the industry's progress.  |
| <a href="#"><u>Annie E. Casey Foundation - Race Matters: Organizational Self-Assessment</u></a>   | A toolkit that offers a simple 19-question paper quiz for organizations to identify the strengths of their employees and organizations. Users tally their scores, and specific ranges result in set feedback.   |
| <a href="#"><u>Culturally Effective Organizations Framework - Organizational Assessment</u></a>   | A paper-based tool for large organizations that provide care and support to individuals in the health care, education and social services sectors.  |
| <a href="#"><u>Centre of Expertise for Accessible Client Service - AccessAbility Playbook</u></a> | A paper-based assessment tool to assess whether government programs are accessible to persons with disabilities. It also provides guidelines and best practices on universal design, customer service and communications. The focus areas of the tool are disability management policy and workplace resources, disability prevention, and early invention and time return to work processes. |
| <a href="#"><u>D5 - DEI Self-Assessment</u></a>   | A paper-based tool that examines EDI in several categories, including organizational policy, implementation of EDI in operations and accountability measures. Responses to questions focus on "yes" and "no" responses and consider diverse groups. Scoring indicates the organization's progress.  |
| <a href="#"><u>Fair360 - EDI Survey</u></a>   | A survey that helps organizations to understand the current state of EDI within organizations. It provides users with a complimentary report card and provides benchmarks against industry standards.   |

| Name   | Description  |
|--|--|
| <a href="#"><u>Global Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Benchmarks - EDI Self-Assessment Tool</u></a>                              | A free resource that helps organizations determine strategy, track progress and work toward EDI growth and development. It provides an understanding of the current state of EDI, opportunities for improvement and an action plan to move forward. They also offer paid services, including an EDI audit and review to help organizations improve EDI within their organizations.                             |
| <a href="#"><u>International Disability Management Standards Council - Disability Management Self-Assessment</u></a>             | A paper-based and online self-assessment tool that allows organizations to assess their disability management efforts. Users receive a report that outlines their current performance, identifies best practices and notes areas for improvement.  |
| <a href="#"><u>JustPartners - Checklist</u></a>  | A toolkit that offers a simple 28-question paper quiz to help organizations advance EDI.   |
| <a href="#"><u>Meyer - DEI Spectrum Tool</u></a>   | A self-assessment tool that helps organizations evaluate their internal EDI practices on a scale. No curated feedback is offered.  |
| <a href="#"><u>Nova Scotia Works - Diversity Assessment Tool</u></a>   | A self-assessment questionnaire with resources and best practices.   |
| <a href="#"><u>Open Door Group and Presidents Group - Disability Inclusive Employer Self-Assessment Tool</u></a>                 | A self-assessment tool that focuses on hiring and retention practices, employee benefits, physical and digital accessibility, organizational culture and metrics. Organizations answer 35 questions and receive a report with areas for improvement. Organizations in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario can request free support in developing an implementation plan.             |
| <a href="#"><u>Praxis Project - Working Principles for Health Justice &amp; Racial Equity Organizational Self-Assessment</u></a> | A tool for large organizations that allows organizations to understand health justice and racial equity and identify opportunities for improvement. It is a self-assessment, and for \$75, Praxis collects responses and provides aggregate results. They also offer more detailed analyses and recommendations for next steps.  |
| <b>Playbooks and Toolkits</b>  |  |
| <a href="#"><u>A11Y Project - WCAG Compliance Checklist</u></a>  | A checklist to help individuals, organizations and governments develop accessible web content.   |
| <a href="#"><u>Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work - Disability Confidence Toolkit</u></a>                               | A free disability confidence toolkit. It offers extensive resources on workplace accommodations, environments, career development, corporate strategy, communication and evaluation. For example, they have a toolkit for developing approaches to accommodations, which outlines different accommodation processes, how to develop a strategy and relevant documents to help support accommodation processes. |

| Name   | Description  |
|--|--|
| <a href="#"><u>Communication Disabilities Access Canada - Accessibility Checklists</u></a>   | A series of checklists to help organizations develop policies and procedures relating to communications.   |
| <a href="#"><u>Conference Board of Canada - Employers' Toolkit</u></a>   | A report that provides advice to employers about workplace practices that can lead to increased inclusivity for persons with disabilities. It offers suggestions on AODA compliance, checklists, tips and case studies to help employers implement accessible employment strategies.     |
| <a href="#"><u>Discoverability Network - Toolkits</u></a>  | A series of toolkits to help organizations improve disability inclusion. It includes information on how to start conversations about accessibility and HR practices.   |
| <a href="#"><u>Diversity Institute - Diversity &amp; Inclusion Playbook</u></a>  | A digital tool to search for and access hundreds of EDI best practices across different industries, organization sizes and sectors.  |
| <a href="#"><u>Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability Inclusion - Neurodiversity Hiring Checklist for Organizational Success</u></a> | A hiring checklist that provides best practices for successful neuro-inclusion hiring and retention programs in the private sector.  |
| <a href="#"><u>Electricity Human Resources Canada - Resource Kit</u></a>   | A toolkit designed to help organizations develop initiatives for accessibility and inclusion. Key focus areas include inclusive cultures, accessibility standards, recruitment, retention, promotion and accommodations.   |
| <a href="#"><u>EnviroCentre and City for All Women Initiative - Accessibility and Inclusion Toolkit</u></a>  | A toolkit for climate organizations seeking to create more accessible and inclusive workplaces for persons with disabilities. This website includes background information on persons with disabilities as well as best practices to support persons with disabilities in the workplace. |
| <a href="#"><u>The Micropedia of Microaggressions</u></a>  | A website with examples of microaggressions that highlights their harmful impact on individuals.   |
| <a href="#"><u>Ontario Human Rights Code - Accessibility Evaluation Checklist</u></a>  | An accessibility evaluation checklist to help identify barriers to access of buildings, including exterior access, interior access and signage.  |
| <a href="#"><u>Stanford University - Building Inclusive Boards for Tomorrow</u></a>  | A playbook to help guide corporate governance. The website includes strategies for building board cultures and a playbook to help search for new talent to add the board. The playbook includes guidance on skills matrices and practices to remove bias.                                |
| <a href="#"><u>W3 - How to Meet WCAG</u></a>   | A reference guide on web content accessibility guidelines requirements.  |
| <a href="#"><u>What Works Toolkit</u></a>  | A toolkit of resources and leading practices to advance EDI in organizations.  |



# Appendix B: Accessibility DAT Questions

**Table B1. Accessibility DAT Questions**

| Question #                      | Question  |
|---------------------------------|---|
| <b>Governance</b>               |   |
| Q1                              | Is there representation of persons with disabilities on the board of directors and/or leadership?   |
| Q2                              | Does the organization have an EDI policy that references persons with disabilities?   |
| Q3                              | Is leadership required to undertake accessibility training?   |
| Q4                              | Do leaders communicate the case for thinking about persons with disabilities as part of the business strategy?  |
| <b>Human Resource Processes</b> |   |
| Q5                              | Does the organization have a strategy to recruit persons with disabilities?   |
| Q6                              | Does the organization provide accommodations for persons with disabilities throughout the recruitment process?  |
| Q7                              | Does your company have an EDI statement in job postings regarding reasonable accommodation?   |
| Q8                              | Does the organization review job postings to remove unnecessary job qualifications that would present a barrier to persons with disabilities?   |
| Q9                              | Does the organization have diverse selection committees?  |
| Q10                             | Do people involved in the recruitment and selection process have EDI training which addresses issues of accessibility? Does the employment interview process include unconscious bias training? |

| Question #     | Question   |
|----------------|--|
| Q11            | Are guidelines for the process and alternative forms of interview questions prepared to accommodate persons living with disabilities?  |
| Q12            | Do all employees get mandatory training on Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) compliance suited for their roles?   |
| Q13            | Are the organization's professional development programs inclusive for persons with disabilities?  |
| Q14            | Does the organization offer a career planning system for employees with disabilities?  |
| Q15            | Does the organization actively offer mentorship opportunities for employees with disabilities?   |
| Q16            | Does the organization consider accessibility in the exit interview format and questions?   |
| Q17            | Is diversity tracked in employee separations – e.g., retirements, dismissals, voluntary exits, layoffs?  |
| <b>Culture</b> |  |
| Q18            | Does the organization have an accessibility policy?  |
| Q19            | Does the organization have documented Individual Accommodation Plans (IAPs) for employees with disabilities?   |
| Q20            | Does the organization have individualized workplace emergency response plans for employees with disabilities?  |
| Q21            | Does the organization have policies for Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) physical accessibility requirements?  |
| Q22            | Does the organization have policies for Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) digital accessibility requirements?   |
| Q23            | Does your company have a publicly available Accessibility Statement?   |
| Q24            | Does your organization have a formal accessibility committee or employee resource group for persons with disabilities?   |
| Q25            | Does the organization provide a safe process for employees with disabilities to disclose their need for change in the workplace, and does not require the disclosure of medical details to ensure accommodation? |
| Q26            | Are organizational social events and celebrations designed so that employees with disabilities are able to participate without barriers? Is there a protocol to follow?  |
| Q27            | Are flexible working arrangements available?   |

| Question #                       | Question   |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Measurement and Tracking EDI     |  |
| Q28                              | Are there employment metrics and targets for persons with disabilities including different roles as well as full time and part time employment?                                  |
| Q29                              | Is there accountability for diversity targets, as they relate to persons with disabilities, built into recruitment and performance management systems?                           |
| Diversity across the Value Chain |  |
| Q30                              | Are vendors from diverse backgrounds, including persons with disabilities, engaged as a part of the buyer selection process?   |
| Q31                              | Is accessibility and compliance with Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) a consideration when selecting new contractors or vendors?                         |
| Q32                              | Do requests for proposals, whether digital or physical, include the requirement for accessibility as determined by the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)? |
| Q33                              | Is accessibility considered in research and development of products and services?  |
| Q34                              | Are persons with disabilities involved and engaged in the research and development of products and services?   |
| Q35                              | Does the organization use inclusive design practices?  |
| Q36                              | Does the organization include representation of persons with disabilities on public and internal facing materials without stereotypes?   |
| Q37                              | Does the organization include standards for inclusive communications?  |
| Q38                              | Are all goods and services provided to customers in a way that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities?   |
| Q39                              | Does your organization provide a variety of ways for receiving feedback and engaging with customers?   |
| Outreach and Expanding the Pool  |  |
| Q40                              | Does the organization work with external partners to improve participation of and services to persons with disabilities?   |
| Q41                              | Does the organization communicate the importance of integrating persons with disabilities in the workplace to external stakeholders?   |
| Q42                              | Does the organization engage with the ecosystem to advocate for persons with disabilities?   |

# Appendix C: Accessibility Best Practices

**Table C1. Accessibility and disability inclusion best practices**

| Industry                                   | Resource   | Activities and/or Initiativesw  |
|--|--|---|
| <b>Governance, Leadership and Strategy</b> |  |   |
| Other Services                             | <u><a href="#">March of Dimes Canada - Board of Directors</a></u>  | March of Dimes Canada profiles its board of directors on their website. In April 2025, the board comprised sixteen individuals, including eight women, three racialized wpeople and three persons with disabilities.  |
| Other Services                             | <u><a href="#">Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians (AEBC) - Leadership Team</a></u>                 | The AEBC leadership team for 2023–2024 has eight members, seven of whom are blind or partially blind.   |
| Public Administration                      | <u><a href="#">Accessibility Standards of Canada - Governance Policy</a></u>                             | Accessibility Standards of Canada’s governance policy include considerations for accessibility, such as board meetings, activities, public meetings and other policies.   |
| Health Care and Social Assistance          | <u><a href="#">Health and Supportive Care Providers Oversight Authority (HSCPOA) - Skills Matrix</a></u> | HSCPOA has a skills matrix that outlines 14 competencies, including public safety, change management, board experience and financial literacy. The board appointee process also includes considerations for diversity, including gender, socio-economic status and persons with disabilities. |

| Industry  | Resource   | Activities and/or Initiativesw  |
|---|--|---|
| Arts, Entertainment and Recreation              | <a href="#"><u>Alpine Canada - Skills Matrix</u></a>   | Alpine Canada's skill matrix includes considerations for diversity, including gender, language and other forms of diversity (e.g., racialized people and persons with disabilities).  |
| Public Administration                           | <a href="#"><u>Government of British Columbia - Competency and Attributes Matrix Guide</u></a> | The Government of British Columbia's board skills matrix includes the categories disability/diverse-ability, ethno-cultural background, gender expression and/or identity, identification as a visible minority, Indigenous identity, LGBTQ2S+ identity, place of origin/regional background, race and religion.  |
| Educational Services                            | <a href="#"><u>Toronto Metropolitan University - Board Governance Toolkit</u></a>              | The Chang School of Continuing Education at Toronto Metropolitan University developed a Board Governance Toolkit that provides resources on inclusive language, board diversity, accessible meetings and more.  |
| Other Services                                  | <a href="#"><u>RTOERO - Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy</u></a>                         | RTOERO's DEI policy includes disability as a dimension of diversity. The policy outlines a commitment to removing barriers and ensuring equitable access for all members and aligns with the AODA.  |
| Public Administration                           | <a href="#"><u>Government of Canada - Disability Inclusion Action Plan</u></a>                 | The Government of Canada developed a Disability Inclusion Action plan with five objectives: (1) improve social and economic inclusion for persons with disabilities, (2) reduce poverty, (3) create a barrier-free Canada by 2040, (4) develop a consistent approach to disability inclusion across the Government of Canada and (5) foster a culture of inclusion.   |
| Professional, Scientific and Technical Services | <a href="#"><u>KPMG Canada - Disability Inclusion Action Plan</u></a>                          | KPMG Canada launched a Disability Inclusion Action Plan in 2020 to raise awareness of biases, provide ongoing education to advance EDI and allyship, and advocate for change. The plan includes considerations for diverse representation, HR practices, education and procurement, among other key areas. To date, KPMG has launched the Diversity Inclusion Network, neurodiversity recruitment programs and a portal with accessibility resources and tools. |



| Industry  | Resource  | Activities and/or Initiativesw  |
|---|---|---|
| Health Care and Social Assistance               | <a href="#"><u>Autism Alliance Canada - 5 Year Strategic Plan 2023–2028</u></a>                                       | Autism Alliance of Canada has a Strategic Plan that emphasizes learning from each other, meaningfully including persons with disabilities, adding value to the broader disability community and ensuring equity in representation among all stakeholder groups.                       |
| Professional, Scientific and Technical Services | <a href="#"><u>Accenture - Importance of Disability Inclusion</u></a>   | Accenture’s website highlights leadership’s commitment to disability inclusion.   |
| <b>Human Resource Practices</b>                 |   |   |
| Information and Cultural Industries             | <a href="#"><u>auticon Canada - Recruitment Strategy</u></a>  | auticon Canada offers employment coordinators to facilitate persons with disabilities integration in the workplace. Employment coordinators have expertise in clinical psychology, performance coaching, managing anxiety disorders, special education and vocational rehabilitation. |
| Finance and Insurance                           | <a href="#"><u>RBC - Career Edge Program</u></a>  | RBC has partnered with Career Edge to provide work experience to more than 200 persons with disabilities.   |
| Public Administration                           | <a href="#"><u>Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat - Accessibility Strategy for the Public Service of Canada</u></a> | The Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat developed a strategy on how to improve the recruitment, retention and promotion of persons with disabilities in the public service.  |
| Other Services                                  | <a href="#"><u>Discoverability Network - Building an Inclusive Workplace</u></a>                                      | The Discoverability Network offers tips for improving organizations’ recruitment strategies to ensure they are inclusive for persons with disabilities. These strategies include creating inclusive job postings and offering different ways to receive applications.                 |
| Finance and Insurance                           | <a href="#"><u>RSA Group - Accommodation for Job Applicants with Disabilities</u></a>                                 | RSA Group has a policy for accommodations for applicants with disabilities. Accommodations may be requested at any stage of the application process.  |
| Finance and Insurance                           | <a href="#"><u>Fengate - Accommodation Process</u></a>  | Fengate has a process for offering accommodations for persons with disabilities, including individual accommodation plans and formal reviews.   |

| Industry  | Resource   | Activities and/or Initiativesw  |
|---|--|---|
| Finance and Insurance                           | <a href="#"><u>RFA Bank - Accessible Employment Practices</u></a>  | RFA is committed to providing fair and accessible employment practices and developing individual accommodation plans and return-to-work policies for employees who have been absent due to disability.  |
| Other Services                                  | <a href="#"><u>Canadian National Institute for the Blind - Hiring - Encouraging Statement</u></a>  | CNIB is committed to fostering an inclusive workplace and ensuring recruitment and selection are fair, transparent and accessible. Job postings on this website include statements of reasonable accommodation and encouraging words for equity-deserving groups. |
| Accommodation and Food Services                 | <a href="#"><u>Righteous Gelato - Accommodation statement</u></a>  | Righteous Gelato's statement of accommodation is included in all company descriptions.  |
| Professional, Scientific and Technical Services | <a href="#"><u>Unbounce - Career Statement</u></a>   | Unbounce's inclusive statement shows that they are willing to make accommodations during recruitment.   |
| Other Services                                  | <a href="#"><u>Muscular Dystrophy Canada - Career Page</u></a>   | The careers page has a statement of inclusion and commitment to employment equity, "especially for persons with disabilities." They highlight that they support equal opportunity and advancement in accordance with competence for all employees.                |
| Public Administration                           | <a href="#"><u>Government of Ontario - Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act - How to Make the Hiring Process Accessible</u></a> | The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act outlines how to make the hiring process more accessible. It includes job postings, accommodations, interview formats and more information.  |
| Health Care and Social Assistance               | <a href="#"><u>Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability (EARN) - Job Descriptions and Announcements</u></a>                    | EARN provides guidelines on developing job descriptions to help increase the number of applicants with disabilities.  |

| Industry  | Resource  | Activities and/or Initiativesw   |
|---|---|--|
| Professional, Scientific and Technical Services | <a href="#"><u>Abilities Canada - Hiring Process</u></a>                                      | Abilities Centre's job postings include information about position type, rate of pay and accommodations. These postings also use person-first language and remove redundant information (e.g., an asset). Interviews also use transparent processes, including sending questions in advance and options to answer pre-screening questions (e.g., written, voice note, video, phone call and video call). |
| Information and Cultural Industries             | <a href="#"><u>auticon Canada - Interview Process</u></a>                                     | auticon Canada uses a four-step interview process: application, informal interview, technical interview and skills assessment. This process ensures that neurodiverse job seekers can bring their authentic selves. They also provide a breakdown of job roles—early stage, intermediate and senior—showing how persons with disabilities fit within the organization.                                   |
| Educational Services                            | <a href="#"><u>University of Victoria - Selection Committee Guidelines</u></a>                | The University of Victoria has guidelines on how to create diverse search committees to ensure diverse perspectives and expertise.   |
| Information and Cultural Industries             | <a href="#"><u>BenchSci - Accessibility Training</u></a>                                      | BenchSci provides training to all employees on Ontario's accessibility laws and the Human Rights Code. They also provide mental health and wellness training to managers.  |
| Public Administration                           | <a href="#"><u>Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses - Accessibility Training</u></a> | CFIB provides training to all employees on Ontario's accessibility laws and Human Rights Code.   |
| Arts, Entertainment and Recreation              | <a href="#"><u>Cineflix - Accessibility Training</u></a>                                      | Cineflix ensures all employees receive training on Ontario's AODA. They also offer EDI training, speaker panels and other related training to create a more inclusive company culture.   |
| Professional, Scientific and Technical services | <a href="#"><u>Cohen Highley Lawyers - Accessibility Training</u></a>                         | Cohen Highley Lawyers offers training to all employees on the requirements for the AODA, Integrated Accessibility Standards, IAS policy and the Human Rights Code.   |

| Industry  | Resource   | Activities and/or Initiativesw  |
|---|--|---|
| Finance and Insurance                           | <a href="#"><u>Fengate - Accessibility Training</u></a>  | Fengate offers accessibility training to all employees, individuals who participate in policy development and individuals who provide goods and services.   |
| Health Care and Social Assistance               | <a href="#"><u>Employer Assistance and Resource Network on Disability (EARN) - Professional Development and Advancement of Persons with Disabilities</u></a> | A toolkit that provides examples of ways to implement career planning systems for employee retention, such as career ladder programs, merit pay and rotational assignments.   |
| <b>Values and Culture</b>                       |  |   |
| Information and Cultural Industries             | <a href="#"><u>BenchSci - Accessibility Policy</u></a>   | BenchSci has an accessibility strategy and multi-year accessibility plan that aims to prevent and remove accessibility barriers. This plan aligns with AODA standards, including accessible emergency information, information and communications, and employment.  |
| Public Administration                           | <a href="#"><u>Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses - Accessibility Plan</u></a>  | CFIB has a multi-year accessibility policy to improve opportunities for persons with disabilities. This plan aligns with standards set by the AODA, including accessible emergency information, information and communications, and employment.   |
| Public Administration                           | <a href="#"><u>Government of Ontario - Accessibility Policy Sample</u></a>   | A sample accessibility policy from the Government of Ontario.   |
| Arts, Entertainment and Recreation              | <a href="#"><u>Cineflix - Accessibility plan</u></a>   | Cineflix has a multi-year accessibility plan that outlines their commitment to inclusive training, employment, communications and design of public spaces. This plan aligns with AODA standards.  |
| Professional, Scientific and Technical Services | <a href="#"><u>Cohen Highley Lawyers - Accessibility Plan</u></a>  | Cohen Highley Lawyers' accessibility plan outlines their commitment to enabling persons with disabilities to achieve their full potential. It provides a detailed breakdown of specific actions related to AODA standards and their progress. For example, in the design of public spaces, they review construction plans to ensure they meet the requirements of the Integrated Accessibility Standards. |

| Industry  | Resource   | Activities and/or Initiativesw   |
|---|--|--|
| Professional, Scientific and Technical Services | <a href="#"><u>KPMG - Website Accessibility</u></a>                    | KPMG has several accessibility policies, including a multi-year plan, an accessibility and customer service policy, and a website accessibility policy. The website accessibility policy contains requirements for browsers, screen resolution, images, multimedia and feedback.   |
| Finance and Insurance                           | <a href="#"><u>HSBC - Website Accessibility</u></a>                    | HSBC is committed to providing a website accessible to the broadest possible audience, regardless of technology or ability. Their website endeavours to meet the WCAG AA standards. They seek to ensure that their website is accessible to people who use assistive technologies, such as screen readers and speech-input software, and those unable to use a mouse or a pointing device. |
| Professional, Scientific and Technical Services | PwC - Disability Inclusion Impact Report                               | PWC's disability inclusion report has many great resources, including Disability Inclusion Networks.   |
| Information and Cultural Industries             | <a href="#"><u>Ecovadis - Sustainability Report</u></a>                | Ecovadis has five internal EDI networks to support employees: 2SLGBTQ+, gender equity, interculturality, employees with disabilities or special medical conditions and work-life balance support.  |
| Professional, Scientific and Technical Services | <a href="#"><u>KPMG - Disability Inclusion Network</u></a>             | KPMG has created a Disability Inclusion Network to be the voice of persons with disabilities at the firm. In addition to providing those with disabilities with community connections, the network also provides a space to advance education and awareness across the organization by collaborating with internal teams, people networks and external organizations.                      |
| Finance and Insurance                           | Computershare Trust Company of Canada - Employee Resource Groups       | Computershare Trust Company of Canada has seven Employee Resource Groups: the Black Leadership Group, three regional Women4Women groups, Purple Pride, Mental Health and Wellbeing and the DisABILITY Resource Group.  |
| Public Administration                           | <a href="#"><u>City of Vancouver - Accessible Events Checklist</u></a> | A comprehensive checklist for planning accessible events that considers accessibility in all steps, including planning, promotion and staff training.  |



| Industry  | Resource  | Activities and/or Initiativesw  |
|---|---|---|
| <b>Measurement and Tracking of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion</b>    |   |   |
| Administrative and Support, Waste Management and Remediation Services | <a href="#"><u>Ontario Disability Employment Network - Annual Report - Business Engagement</u></a>                        | Ontario Disability Employment Network's quantitative measures of EDI KPIs for business engagement goals.  |
| Public Administration   | <a href="#"><u>Government of Canada - Measuring Progress: Accessibility Strategy for the Public Service of Canada</u></a> | Results from the Government of Canada's Accessibility Strategy. It includes KPIs related to promotions, accommodation and built environment, among other key areas.   |
| <b>Diversity Across the Value Chain</b>                               |   |   |
| Information and Cultural Industries                                   | <a href="#"><u>Telus - Supplier Diversity Program</u></a>   | Telus' Supplier Code of Conduct includes engaging diverse suppliers, improving accessibility and upholding human rights.  |
| Educational Services  | <a href="#"><u>Ontario Tech University - Accessible Procurement Toolkit</u></a>   | An internal document for Ontario Tech University and faculty and staff that provides general considerations for incorporating accessibility into procurement processes.   |
| Educational Services  | <a href="#"><u>eCampus Ontario - Procuring Accessible Content</u></a>   | A series of guidelines and checklists for the procurement of accessible digital content and development services.   |
| Educational Services  | <a href="#"><u>eCampus Ontario - Accessibility Questions for Vendors</u></a>  | A document with examples of how accessibility inquiries should be included as part of requests for proposals. This includes considerations for compliance and standards, assistive technologies, training, responsive design and feedback mechanisms.   |
| Information and Cultural Industries                                   | <a href="#"><u>CBC Radio - Accessibility Feedback</u></a>   | This website shows that accessibility is considered constantly to improve products at CBC Radio.  |
| Information and Cultural Industries                                   | <a href="#"><u>Accessible Media Inc. - Research Panel</u></a>   | Accessible Media Inc.'s Research Panel is an ongoing feedback mechanism between the organization and the community. Individuals identifying as persons with a disability can share their perspectives on accessible technology, TV programming and other forms of media through focus groups, questionnaires, surveys and more. |

| Industry                               | Resource   | Activities and/or Initiativesw   |
|--|--|--|
| Other Services                         | <a href="#"><u>Toronto Arts Council - Applicant Accessibility Support</u></a>                  | The Toronto Arts Council offers support for grant program applicants with a disability who require assistance from service providers. Progressively minded organizations who wish to remove accessibility barriers for program applicants can use this Toronto Arts Council initiative as a model for their practices.   |
| Information and Cultural Industries    | <a href="#"><u>Google - Disability Inclusion</u></a>   | Examples of tools and stories of ways Google builds its products to be accessible for persons with disabilities.   |
| Public Administration                  | <a href="#"><u>AODA - How to make customer service accessible</u></a>                          | Steps organizations can take to make their customer service practices more accessible.   |
| Public Administration                  | <a href="#"><u>AODA - How to make information Accessible</u></a>                               | Examples of how to make different types of information more accessible and case examples to help demonstrate why it is important.  |
| Finance and Insurance                  | <a href="#"><u>Motus Bank - Accessibility information to access the Motus Bank website</u></a> | Motus Bank provides a list of keyboard shortcuts for PCs and MACs for accessibility purposes.  |
| Manufacturing                          | <a href="#"><u>Bimbo Canada - Accessibility</u></a>  | Bimbo Canada is committed to accessibility. This website highlights this commitment with notes about customer service, training and employment.  |
| Public Administration                  | <a href="#"><u>AODA - How to make customer service accessible</u></a>                          | Steps organizations can take to make their customer service practices more accessible.   |
| <b>Outreach and Expanding the Pool</b> |  |  |
| Information and Cultural Industries    | <a href="#"><u>Accessible Media Inc. - AMI Scholarship Program</u></a>                         | Accessible Media Inc.'s AMI Scholarship Program is open to Canadian citizens or permanent residents of Canada with a permanent disability who are currently registered in and returning to a full-time program of study at an accredited Canadian post-secondary college or university. Each year, AMI awards two \$5,000 bursaries to two deserving students with a permanent disability: one from the English community and one from the French community. |

| Industry  | Resource   | Activities and/or Initiativesw  |
|---|--|---|
| Administrative and Support, Waste Management and Remediation Services | <a href="#"><u>Ontario Disability Employment Network (ODEN) - Annual Report - Research and Collaboration</u></a> | An example of research and collaboration projects at the Ontario Disability Employment Network.   |
| Information and Cultural Industries                                   | <a href="#"><u>Auticon - About Us</u></a>  | auticon's mission is to partner with clients looking for neurodiverse workers.  |
| Finance and Insurance   | <a href="#"><u>HSBC - Inclusion</u></a>  | Commitments to inclusion with examples of their initiatives for persons with disabilities, including the Business Disability Forum and Global Business Collaboration for Better Workplace Mental Health.              |
| Educational Services  | <a href="#"><u>University of Toronto - Statement of Commitment Regarding Persons with Disabilities</u></a>       | Example of University of Toronto's statement of commitment regarding persons with disabilities. It also includes links to their statement on access to information, employment equity and human rights, among others. |
| Professional, Scientific and Technical Services                       | <a href="#"><u>BenchSci - Showing Up: Accommodations and Accessibility in a Remote-first World</u></a>           | BenchSci worked with other organizations to host a panel discussion that delved into the experiences of three remarkable business leaders and strong accessibility advocates.   |



## Appendix D: Centre for Research on Work Disability Partners

**Table D1. Centre for Research on Work Disability partners**

### Universities and Research Centre

- Caledon Institute of Social Policy
- Canadian Institutes for Health Research (CIHR) Work Disability Prevention Strategic Training Program
- Centre for Research on Inner City Health
- Institute for Work & Health
- McMaster University - Faculty of Social Sciences; DeGroote School of Business; Centre for Health Economics and Policy Analysis; School of Rehabilitation Science.
- St. Michael's Hospital Li Ka Shing Knowledge Institute
- University of Toronto
- Dalla Lana School of Public Health
- University of Waterloo
- School of Public Health and Health Systems
- York University
- Institute for Health Research
- Centre de recherche CHU Ste. Justine
- Centre de recherche Hôpital Charles-Le Moyne
- Centre hospitalier Universitaire Sainte-Justine
- Centre interdisciplinaire de recherche en réadaptation et intégration sociale CIRRIIS-IRDPQ
- Chaire en gestion de la santé et de la sécurité du travail Université Laval
- Université Laval
- Memorial University
- Safety Net Centre for Occupational Health and Safety Research
- Pacific Coast University
- Simon Fraser University
- University of British Columbia
- School of Population and Public Health
- Saint Mary's University

## System Actors

- Employment and Social Development Canada
- Veterans Affairs Canada
- Realize
- ARCH Disability Law Centre
- Bramalea Community Health Centre
- Injured Workers Community Legal Clinic (IWC)
- Ministry of Community and Social Services
- Office of the Worker Adviser
- Sudbury Community Legal Clinic
- Alliance Québécoise des regroupements régionaux pour l'intégration des personnes handicapées (AQRIPH)
- Confédération des organismes de personnes handicapées du Québec (COPHAN)
- Ministère de l'emploi et de la solidarité sociale du gouvernement du Québec

## Insurers and Employers

- Stantec Consulting Limited
- Manulife Financial
- AIM Health Group
- Insurance Corporation of British Columbia
- Interior Health

## Community

- Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work
- Canadian Injured Workers Alliance (CIWA)
- Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB)
- Cerebral Palsy Group (United States)
- Cerebral Palsy Guidance (CPG) (United States)
- Council of Canadians with Disabilities (CCD)
- Work Wellness and Disability Prevention Institute (WWDPI)
- Centre for Independent Living in Toronto (CILT)
- Citizens with Disabilities Ontario (CDO)
- Ontario Network of Injured Workers Groups (ONIWG)
- Confédération des syndicats nationaux (CSN)
- Institut de réadaptation en déficience de Québec
- Regroupement des activistes pour l'inclusion au Québec (RAPLIQ)
- Newfoundland Labrador Injured Workers Association
- BC and Yukon Building and Construction Trades Council
- BC Federation of Labour
- Canadian Mental Health Association BC Division





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